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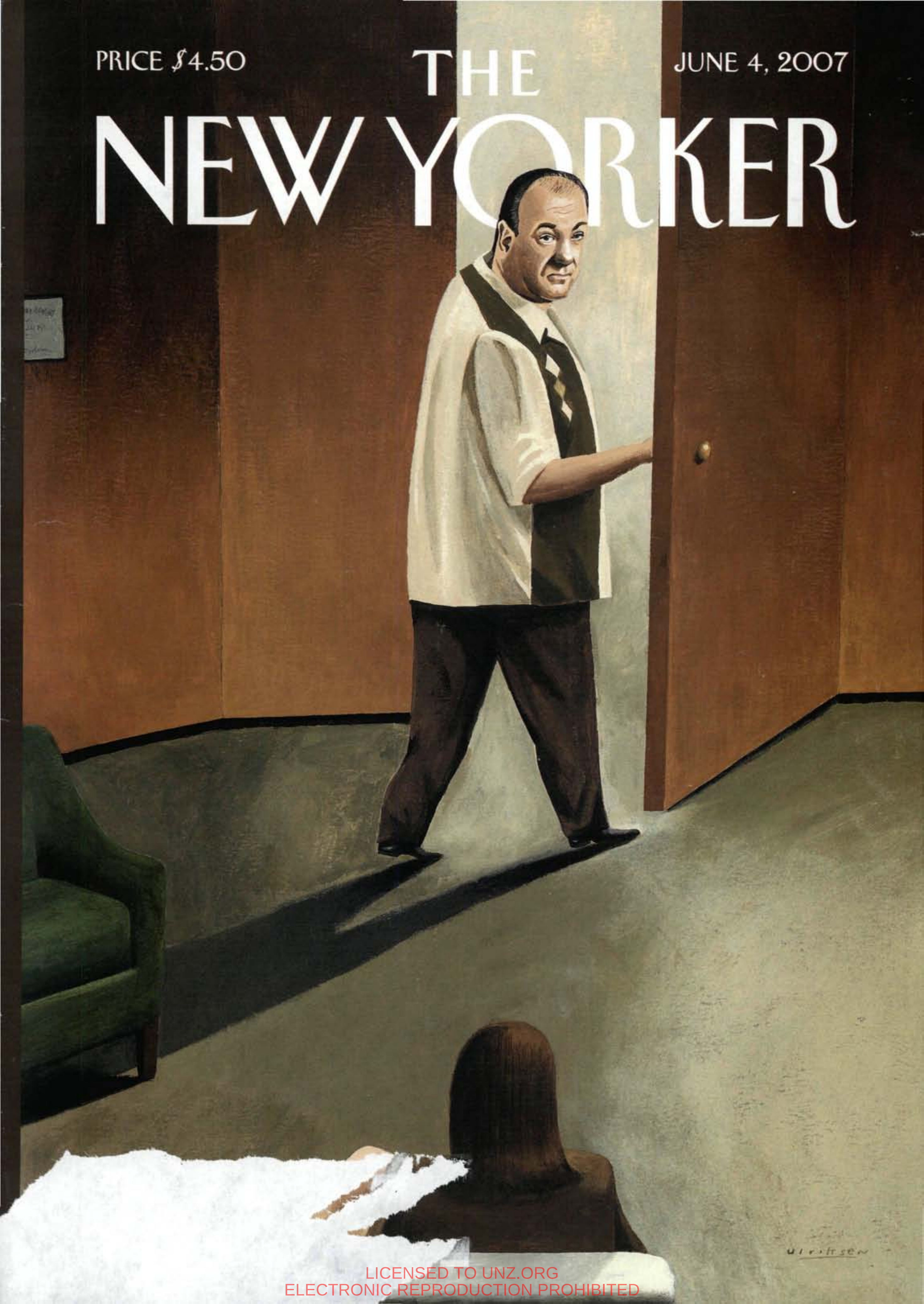

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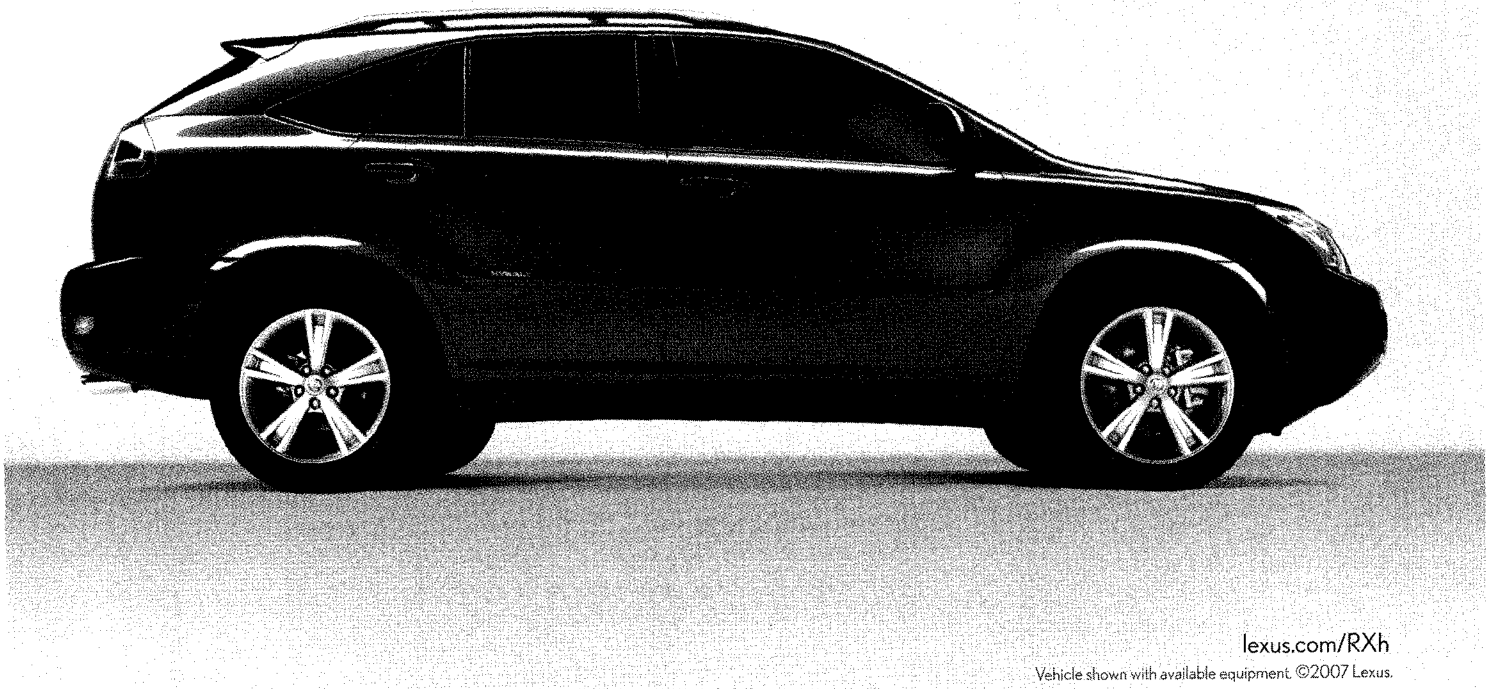

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Günter Grass ("How I Spent the War," p. 68) won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1999. His book "Peeling the Onion," a memoir, comes out in June.

William Trevor (Fiction, p. 82) has a new book of short stories, "Cheating at Canasta," coming out in October.

Louis Menand (Books, p. 92) teaches English at Harvard. His books include "The Metaphysical Club," for which he won a Pulitzer Prize, and "American Studies."

Marvin Bell (Poem, p. 94) will publish "Mars Being Red," his eighteenth collection of poems, in July.

Gary Giddins (Jazz, p. 98) writes for *Jazz Times*. His book "Weather Bird: Jazz at the Dawn of Its Second Century," came out in paperback last year, as did a collection of essays, "Natural Selection: Gary Giddins on Comedy, Film, Music, and Books."

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

John Colapinto talks about interviewing Paul McCartney. / *James Surowiecki* writes about what it will take to turn Chrysler around. / *James Collins* floats some names for the new head of the World Bank. / *Dan Baum* files his final dispatches from New Orleans. / A slide show of paintings by Neo Rauch. / From the archives: *Ian Buruma* on Günter Grass, *Whitney Balliett* on Hank Jones, and more. / Videos from the New Yorker Conference, "2012: Stories from the Near Future." / Animated versions of classic cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events across the country.

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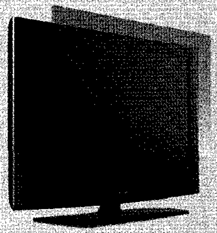

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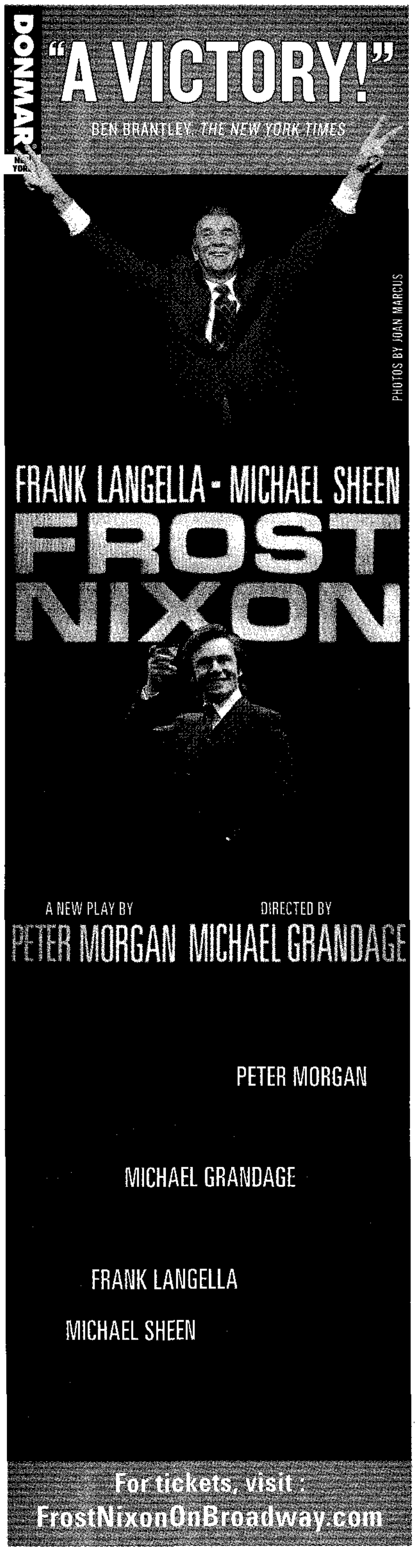

THE MAIL

STOPPING TRAFFIC

Elizabeth Kolbert, in her Comment on Mayor Michael Bloomberg's efforts to stem traffic in New York City as part of a larger environmental policy, looks to London as an example of where the congestion charge has worked (The Talk of the Town, May 7th). The problem in London, though, is that, unlike in New York, the public-transportation system is unreliable, slow, and expensive. For example, my journey to work is the equivalent of travelling from 168th Street to Fourteenth Street, and the round-trip ticket each day costs me five pounds (or just under ten dollars). On my route, the Northern Line, conditions are so bad and the delays so frequent that it is popularly known in London as the Misery Line. Far better than instituting a congestion charge, and then expanding it, would have been to bring mass transit in the city to the level of service, reliability, and price found in Paris, Berlin, New York, and other great cities of the world, and then to encourage people to use it by making other forms of transportation less economically reasonable. Since New York's mass-transit infrastructure is certainly in better condition than London's, it is easier to argue for a congestion charge there. As one civil servant once said of the United States, "Anything you can do, we can do worse."

Richard Giordano
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SPIRITUAL SHORTCUTS

Dana Goodyear, in her dissection of the author Paolo Coelho and his cultish following, exposes the emptiness of this brand of New Age charlatanism ("The Magus," May 7th). How much easier to listen to a mysterious guru tell us that we are "special" than to do the demanding work of authentic spirituality. Selfless service, sacrifice, careful moral reasoning, and humility have no place in Coelho's universe, and it is no surprise to learn of his laughable egomania. Coelho is a symptom of a culture that confuses recreational "self-discovery" with the serious—and collective—search for meaning.

Ramsay M. Harik
Somerville, Mass.

THE FRENCH ELECTION

Jane Kramer, in her recent piece on the French Presidential-election campaign, is right to argue that France is suffering from a sense of malaise that has both political and economic sources ("Round One," April 23rd). But it is unfair to claim that France's central problems are an "endemic" fear of the market, "resistance to economic reform," and "xenophobia and racism." During the nineteen-eighties, France privatized and liberalized its economy with an alacrity that even Margaret Thatcher could not match. Its rates of hourly worker productivity regularly outstrip those of the United States and Britain, and its rate of economic growth is forecast to be roughly two per cent this year—as is that of the United States. But the real problem with Kramer's argument is that it diverts attention from the complex questions of how to reconcile economic prosperity with socially just and politically viable policies and the role that the state should play in that process. In the wake of the American failures in Iraq and in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, it has become abundantly clear that such debates are essential, if difficult, conversations that we Americans postpone at our peril.

Mark Vail
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•

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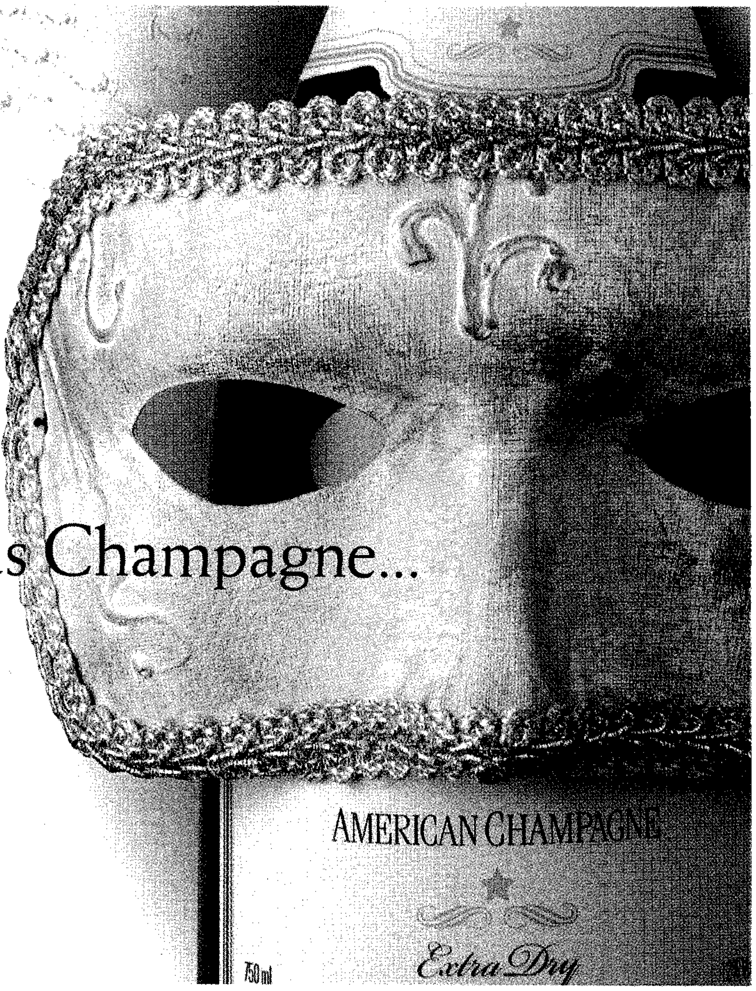

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A participatory screening of Guy Maddin's new film, "Brand Upon the Brain!" Photograph by Gus Powell.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE

O ROMEO

Shakespeare in the Park kicks off the summer with "Romeo and Juliet"—one of four this season. New York City Ballet and American Ballet Theatre both have variations of the romance in their spring repertory; La Mama's current show is a dance opera directed by Ellen Stewart. The Public Theatre's production stars Lauren Ambrose (best known as Claire on "Six Feet Under"), as Juliet, and Oscar Isaac, as her Romeo. (See page 10.)

NIGHT LIFE

ON THE THRONE

The Kings of Leon, three long-haired brothers and a cousin from Nashville, who started out playing taut Southern rock with youthful enthusiasm and have since expanded their palette into more experimental (but still guitar-driven) music, come to Roseland behind their third album, "Because of the Times." (See page 14.)

ART

MONUMENTAL

Forty years' worth of Richard Serra's sculptures—including several examples of the massive, mazelike, and awe-inspiring whorls and loops in Corten steel for which he is best known—go on view at MOMA. (See page 16.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

MOVIE NUT

Erik Satie's deceptively simple melodies were the background music of the Surrealist movement—never more directly than in his score for René Clair's silent classic "Entr'acte" (featuring cameo appearances by Picabia and Man Ray), which the pianist Bruce Levingston will perform along with a showing of the film. (See page 20.)

MOVIES

PHOTO FILES

Walter Reade offers a week of documentary films by and about the legendary photographers of the Magnum agency, including Eve Arnold's "Behind the Veil," about the private lives of women in Dubai, Raymond Depardon's autobiographical "Les Années Déclic," and Anne Makepeace's "Robert Capa: In Love and War." (See page 25.)

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BEHIND THE LID
A new play written by Lee Nagrin and the puppeteer Basil Twist, about a woman in her seventies who travels through her dreams, featuring puppetry by Twist. Opens June 3. (Silver Whale Gallery, 21 Bleecker St. 212-868-4444.)

BEYOND GLORY
Roundabout Theatre Company presents the New York première of Stephen Lang's one-man show, based on Larry Smith's book about war heroes. Robert Falls directs. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE BUTCHER OF BARABOO
In Marisa Wegrzyn's black comedy, Valerie, a butcher in Wisconsin, falls under suspicion when her husband disappears. Judith Ivey directs. Part of the Second Stage Theatre Uptown Festival. In previews. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

CRAZY MARY
Sigourney Weaver stars in a new play by A. R. Gurney, about a wealthy woman and her son who visit a cousin in a mental hospital. Jim Simpson directs. In previews. Opens June 3. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

ESCAPE FROM BELLEVUE
Christopher John Campion's rock musical, with live music by Knockout Drops, about Campion's experiences in a rock band and as an escapee from a mental institution. Alex Timbers directs. Opens May 31. (Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-7171.)

EURYDICE
Sarah Ruhl adapts the myth of Orpheus for this drama, in which Eurydice goes on a journey through the underworld to find her father. Les Waters directs. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT
Abingdon Theatre Company presents this one-man show written and performed by Michael Deep, about a man grappling with his troubling family. Kate Bushmann directs. Previews begin June 2. (312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

HORIZON
Rinde Eckert wrote, composed, and stars in a musical drama about a theologian who is pressured to resign from his seminary. David Schweizer directs. Previews begin June 1. Opens June 5. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA
The National Asian American Theatre Company presents Federico García Lorca's play, about the daughters of a controlling matriarch, adapted and directed by Chay Yew. Previews begin June 1. Opens June 4. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, Nagelberg Theatre, 55 Lexington Ave., at 25th St. 212-279-4200.)

IN A DARK DARK HOUSE
MCC Theatre presents the world première of Neil LaBute's new play. Ron Livingston and Frederick Weller star; Carolyn Cantor directs. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

MARATHON 2007
The twenty-ninth festival of new one-act plays presented by Ensemble Studio Theatre. Playwrights include Julia Cho, Stephen Adly Guirgis, Amy Fox, and Neil LaBute. Opens May 31. (549 W. 52nd St. 212-352-3101.)

MY TRIP TO AL-QAEDA
Encore performances of the play by Lawrence Wright (a writer for this magazine), based on his book about how Al Qaeda orchestrated the attacks of 9/11. June 5-6. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-307-4100.)

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL
At the Mint, St. John Hankin's drama from 1905, about a British man who returns home to his wealthy father after a failed attempt to make it big in Australia. Jonathan Bank directs. In previews. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

ROMEO AND JULIET
Michael Greif directs this production, which begins the Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park season. Lauren Ambrose, Oscar Isaac, and Austin Pendleton star. Previews begin June 5. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

SESSIONS
Albert Tapper wrote the book, music, and lyrics for this Algonquin Theatre production, a musical revolving around a therapist. In previews. (Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

TABLES FOR TWO
MERCAT

45 Bond St. (212-529-8600)—This new tapas restaurant suffered a delay prior to its début, so, on a recent evening, not long after its doors finally opened, it seemed like a celebration in the packed dining room. A slim young man, dressed in a sharp suit with his shirt unbuttoned to his solar plexus, strode in, blowing kisses left and right; meanwhile, the sommelier—also cousin to the owner, helmer of the ham-and-cheese station, and sometime manager—instructed a couple of tables on how to drink, Catalan-style, from a two-spouted flask, holding it high and pouring the wine in a thin stream into his mouth. Perhaps overly invigorated by the lesson, one young woman leapt from her table and exhorted the diners at another to try her wine. They politely declined.

The space—narrow and high-ceilinged, with exposed-brick walls, an elegant mezzanine lined with wine racks, and a tiled partition around the open kitchen—doesn't exactly dampen the noise, and the Euro-frat-party atmosphere might turn away some diners. But it's possible to find reasons to enter the fray. The serious missteps—skewers of bitter snails, absent the promised accompaniment of chorizo; tough razor clams that belied the commonly held belief that bacon, here in the form of a vinaigrette, makes anything better—wouldn't be so disappointing if the kitchen didn't also demonstrate the ability to turn out precisely executed marvels. Sweetbreads, crisply coated outside and meltingly tender inside, were set on a bed of slightly sweet fennel; a mixed-green salad was tossed with a dressing made of twenty-five-year-old sherry, dried fruit, and nuts, giving it both crunch and tang. A special dish of chickpeas, mixed with blood sausage, apricot, mint, and star anise, seemed like a delicate tribute to Moorish Spain. The inconsistency is pervasive: a server had the lineage of a pig down pat ("This comes from black-footed pigs on the Iberian peninsula, who eat only acorns. You'll really taste the nutty flavor") but hesitated over distinguishing Manchego from an Alt Urgell.

The pedigree of Mercat is promising: the owner, Jaime Reixach, is a Barcelona native; his chefs, David Seigal and Ryan Lowder, have experience in the kitchens of both Spain and New York, at Jean Georges. But the impressive credentials didn't ameliorate the final taste—merely passable *churros* (it's hard to foul up sugary fried dough) with a chocolate dipping sauce that had the odd flavor of old leather. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for dinner. Entrées $7-$19.)

—Andrea Thompson

TEA
Japanese war brides reflect on their lives in this play by Velina Hasu Houston, directed by Tina Chen. Opens May 30. (West End Theatre, 263 W. 86th St. 212-352-3101.)

10 MILLION MILES
Atlantic Theatre Company presents a new musical featuring music and lyrics by Patty Griffin, about a young man and woman on a road trip from Florida to upstate New York. Keith Bunin wrote the book; Michael Mayer directs. In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

BRITS OFF BROADWAY
This week at the annual festival of British theatre, "Silverland," by Benjamin Davis, closes (see review below), and "Rosebud: The Lives of Orson Welles," starring Christian McKay, continues its run. Alan Ayckbourn's "Intimate Exchanges," a series of sixteen variations on one premise, with a different play each performance, opens May 31. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

CIRKUS INFERNO
The Ontario-based Daredevil Opera Company presents a vaudeville show, featuring pyrotechnics and an assortment of oddball characters. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

CLYTEMNESTRA'S TEARS
Perched on a wooden stairway with her back to the audience, the Greek actress Themis Bazaka appears almost swallowed by her oddly shaped dress. It's only when she descends the stairs that one gets a look at her face—one of those lucid, worn faces that can flicker with shifting emotion. The director Avra Sidiropoulou's original text (spoken in contemporary Greek, with English supertitles) is imagistic and non-narrative; she doesn't retell the myth of Agamemnon's sacrifice of their daughter, Iphigenia, but uses it as an anchor to Clytemnestra's stream of consciousness. She oscillates between tender memories of her dark-eyed babies and humiliated grief over what has become of them—and of the fates of Agamemnon and herself. Bazaka makes Clytemnestra's story something earthy and piquant; she stands before the audience as a woman alone with her memories, aware of how love can disintegrate into its opposite. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Through June 3.)

FACING EAST
A Mormon couple mourn the suicide of their gay son, in a production by the Utah-based Plan-B Theatre Company. (Atlantic Stage Two, 330 W. 16th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE KAROL WOJTYLA THEATRE FESTIVAL
A series of plays written by Wojtyla, who went on to become Pope John Paul II. "The Jeweler's Shop" explores the concept of marriage as a metaphor for Christ's relationship to the Church. "Our God's Brother," about an artist who turns to religion, begins June 1. (Storm Theatre, 145 W. 46th St. 212-868-4444.)

PASSING STRANGE
A savvy rock memoir by the singer-songwriter Stew, who presides over a musical retelling of his prodigal youth. Loud and smart and lit by neon, Stew's stylish creation playfully flouts the conventions of the *Künstlerroman*, setting folly and wisdom alike to a heady beat. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Through June 3.)

PHALLACY
A comedy of academic manners. An art historian at a Vienna museum (Lisa Harrow) and a chemis-

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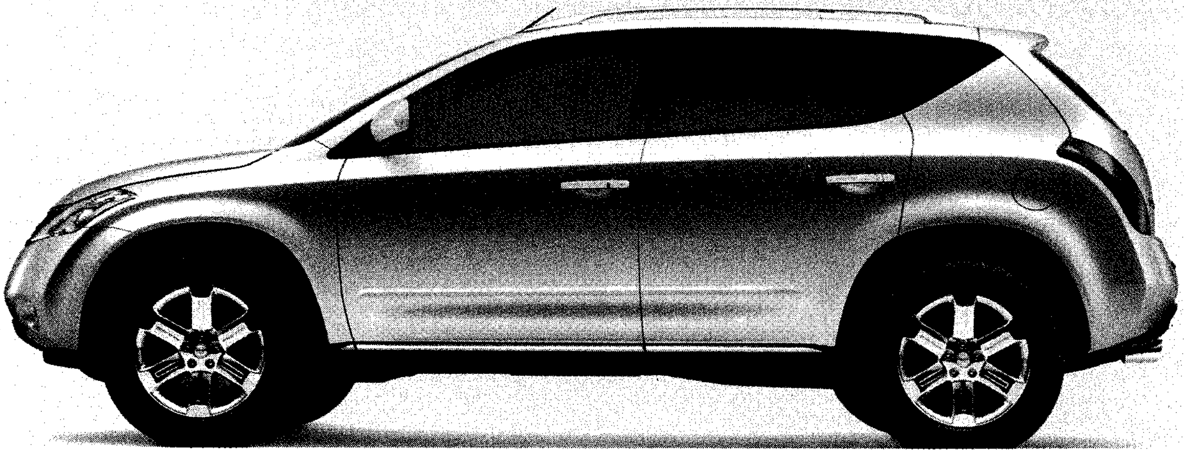

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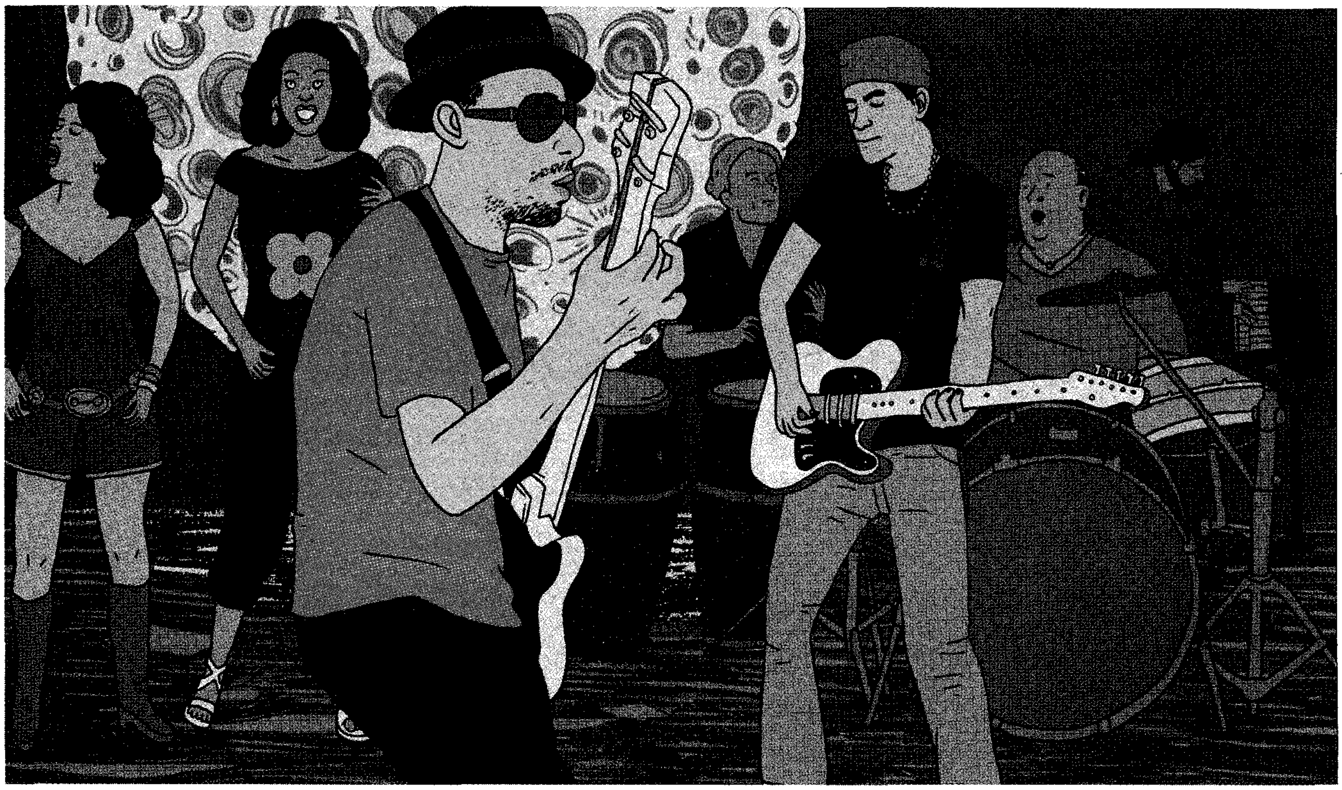
try professor (Simon Jones) clash over the authenticity of an ancient bronze sculpture of a young man. Reputations and egos are at stake. Debates concerning aesthetics versus science are inevitable. Because the playwright, Carl Djerassi, is himself a world-class chemist (he's credited as one of the inventors of the Pill), you may guess who gets the upper hand, though both sides have their innings. The director, Elena Araoz, keeps the proceedings lively, never allowing intellectuality to stand in the way of a good joke. There's even a touch of animate-inanimate eroticism. And credit Katy Tucker with some amazing costume changes achieved by light projection. (Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)



The Los Angeles-based outfit the Soul of John Black, led by John (JB) Bigham, formerly of Fishbone, visits Joe's Pub on May 31.

RUTU MODAN

THE ROMANCE OF MAGNO RUBIO
Loy Arcenas directs this Ma-Yi Theatre Company production of a play by Lonnie Carter, about a Filipino migrant worker in nineteen-thirties California. (Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101.)

ROMEO AND JULIET
Ellen Stewart adapted and directs a dance opera of Shakespeare's tragedy. (La Mama Annex, 66 E. 4th St. 212-475-7710.)

SILVERLAND
As six ravers jitter through a druggy wasteland of night clubs, pursuing the ultimate high, the oceans are rising and the Thames is on the verge of overflowing, threatening to turn all of high-rise London into a silvery water world. In Benjamin Davis's play, which is set in the near future, something strange is clearly afoot. It may be an ecological crisis, or an existential one. After the stoners Mikey (Bradley Taylor) and Dario (Cary Crankson) are jolted from an ecstatic rave into a trance, they wake with scrambled brains, seeking a way to return to their lost club-land paradise. Meanwhile, Ellen (Sophie Hunter) is haunted by visions of a rising tidal wave. Di Trevis directs Davis's scenes energetically, making the most of the clubgoers' juicy slang and their baffled hedonism, but the play lacks a degree of dramatic coherence. In the end, the ravers aren't the only ones left hanging. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through June 3.)

Also Playing

BLACKBIRD: City Center, Stage I, at 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. **THE BRIG:** Living Theatre, 19-21 Clinton St. 212-352-3101. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **COMPANY:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DAUGHTER OF A CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY:** DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 2. **DEUCE:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DON'T QUIT YOUR NIGHT JOB:** HA! Comedy Club, 163 W. 46th St. 212-868-4444. **FROST/NIXON:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **GASLIGHT:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. **GOD'S EAR:** East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-868-4444. Through June 2. **GREY GARDENS:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **110 IN THE SHADE:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200. **INHERIT THE WIND:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **JOURNEY'S END:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **LEGALLY BLONDE THE MUSICAL:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **LOVEMUSIK:** Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **RADIO GOLF:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **TALK RADIO:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

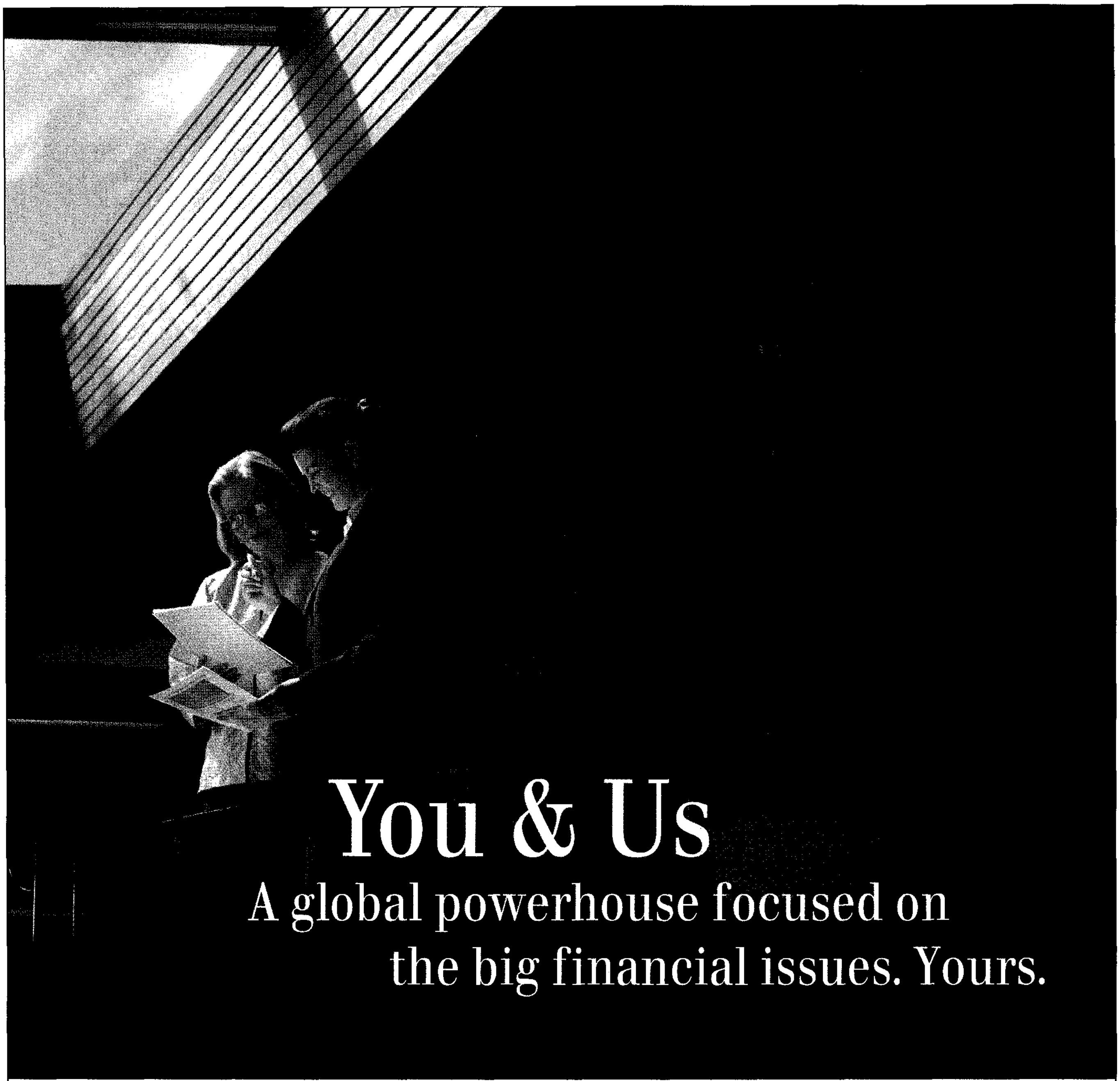
Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—May 31: If there's a bluegrass group out there that can give Alison Krauss & Union Station a run for their money, it's **Rhonda Vincent & the Rage.** A terrific singer and instrumentalist (primarily she plays the mandolin), Vincent fronts a crack unit consisting of the guitarist Josh Williams, the fiddler Hunter Berry, the bassist Mickey Harris, and the banjo player Kenny Ingram. The night promises lightning-fast picking and harmonies as close and gorgeous as they come. June 4: The British hard-rock journeyman **Glenn Hughes** played bass for Deep Purple back in the early seventies and logged some hours fronting a mid-eighties incarnation of Black Sabbath. His most recent solo album, "Music for the Divine," from last year, found him branching out into funk with the aid of members of the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Through June 1: The **National,** a tight quintet of Ohio transplants with a penchant for shimmering, au-courant indie rock, wraps up a five-night home-town stand. June 4: The singer-songwriter **Keren Ann.**

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—June 1: **CSS,** an artsy coed ensemble from São Paulo that approaches dance rock with an old-fashioned punk attitude. (The members claim that they didn't know how to play their instruments when they first got together, a few years ago.) Their album, "Cansei de Ser Sexy" (Portuguese for "tired of being sexy"), is full of bubbly guitar-and-synth-fuelled English-language romps about the socialite Paris Hilton, the fashion magazine *Visionaire*, and other twenty-first-century pop-culture ephemera. With the lascivious Tampa-based rappers **Yo Majesty.** June 4: The Phish keyboardist **Page McConnell.**

HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—June 2: The British hip-hop outfit the **Brand New Heavies** came out of London's acid-jazz scene in the eighties with an accessible hybrid of soulful grooves and smooth funk. They had a number of R. & B. hits in the late eighties and early nineties, when their lead singer was N'Dea Davenport, a lithe dynamo with a sensuous voice and an arresting presence. She left the group for a solo career after their 1994 album, "Brother Sister," was released, but she reunited with them last year for the record "Get Used to It," and now she's back fronting the band. June 5: The **Pipettes,** who formed in Brighton, England, a few years ago, are three young women (plus an all-male backing band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that stays in the shadows). The stylish trio favor polka-dot dresses, synchronized dance moves, and celebratory pop crafted in the classic Phil Spector mold. Their wink-and-a-nod approach (the joyful single "School Uniform" spreads the love evenly between boys and girls) has sent them up the English charts, though they have yet to win over much more than the blogosphere here.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 31: **The Soul of John Black.** John (JB) Bigham, a veteran guitarist who has played with everyone from Miles Davis to Eminem and is perhaps best known for his work with the funk-ska outfit Fishbone, leads this Los Angeles band. The group's self-titled début, from 2003, was an exceptional and eclectic collection of R. & B. that drew on folk and rock sources. "The Good Girl Blues," Bigham's new release, goes straight to the roots of American music, paying a shrewdly contemporary tribute to the likes of Leadbelly, John Lee Hooker, and Muddy Waters. June 3: **Fairport Convention** gives an acoustic performance. Back in the late sixties, this legendary British folk-rock unit launched the careers of Richard Thompson and Sandy Denny, among others. With the founding member Simon Nicol still steering, the band sounds as rowdy and randy as ever. Their latest release is "Sense of Occasion."

JONES BEACH THEATRE
Wantagh, N.Y. (212-307-7171)—June 5: **Fall Out Boy** and **+44** (featuring former members of Blink 182) may upset cranky old punk-rock purists (who consider them wan pretenders), but don't tell that to their sizable audiences of teen-age fans, who revere them as if they were the Sex Pistols and the Clash reincarnated.

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—May 30: The former Pink Floyd linchpin **Roger Waters.** After the departure of the mentally unstable Syd Barrett, the bassist Waters became the band's guiding force, writing some of the music and virtually all the lyrics for a series of seventies-defining albums, none more successful than "Dark Side of the Moon," from 1973, which charted on the *Billboard* 200 list for an astounding fifteen years (according to Waters's people, an estimated one out of every fourteen Americans under the age of fifty owns the record). Waters brings his "Dark Side" world tour to the area this week, performing the high-concept record in its entirety, complete with vintage light-show effects. The other half of the performance will include nuggets from other Pink Floyd albums of the seventies and perhaps a nod to the sixties material as well, following Barrett's death, last year.

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL
The musical portion of this free downtown cultural celebration gets under way on June 1 with the folksy harmonies and psychedelic experimentation of the **Animal Collective.** (South Street Seaport, Pier 17. For more information, visit www.rivertorivernyc.com.)

ROSELAND
239 W. 52nd St. (212-307-7171)—June 5: The Tennessee band **Kings of Leon** was dubbed the "Southern Strokes" upon its début a few years ago by a besotted British press. Since then they have impressed a few foreigners who are slightly more influential in this country—U2, for example, who took them on tour. The Kings are here with songs from their latest record, "Because of the Times."

TOWN HALL
123 W. 43rd St. (212-840-2824)—The Nashville angel **Gillian Welch** has been busy of late. In recent years she has accompanied Emmylou Harris, Solomon Burke, and Ryan Adams—and she's even taken up the drums for Old Crow Medicine Show. The latest place to find her is in the company of Conor Oberst, the singer-songwriter also known as **Bright Eyes.** His new album, "Cassadaga," finds Oberst and his band establishing their own alternative-country sound, with Welch helping out on the compelling cut "Classic Cars." The two are here through June 1.

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—May 31: The **Black Rebel Motorcycle Club,** a California trio, is named for the crew in Brando's "Wild One." They've backed off (a bit) from their speedy, Stooge-like origins, but they still have plenty of leather-jacket attitude. The songs from their new record, "Baby 81," brim with power hooks, but blues roots are more in evidence, and a strong acoustic guitar provides a sturdy engine.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—May 30-June 2: **Regina Carter** had a banner year in 2006, releasing a heartfelt album, "I'll Be Seeing You: A Sentimental Journey," and receiving a MacArthur fellowship. Expect the afterglow of such accomplishments to color the performance of this acclaimed violinist, whose music ranges freely from standards to classical- and pop-influenced material.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—May 29-June 3: The **Bobby Hutcherson** quintet. The vibraphonist's forthcoming album, "For Sentimental Reasons," is a relatively mellow affair, but there's still plenty of juice left in this mature improviser. His band here includes the pianist **Renee Rosnes,** the guitarist **Russell Malone,** and the drummer **Al Foster.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—May 29-June 3: The **Bill Charlap** trio. Working with the bassist **Peter Washington** and the drummer **Kenny Washington,** Charlap displays the poise and taste, and, increasingly, the depth of such grand piano stylists as Hank Jones and the late Tommy Flanagan. The trio's new album is "Live at the Village Vanguard."

FEINSTEIN'S AT LOEWS REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through June 2: The actor **Peter Gallagher** is a multitasking performer as comfortable on a Broadway stage as he is in front of a TV or film camera. For his Feinstein's début, "Songs and Stories," he'll offer an insider's picture of a versatile working life.

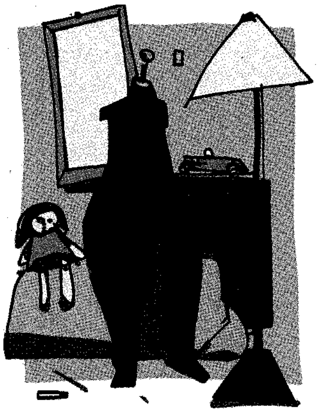
VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—May 29-June 3: The veteran drummer **Billy Hart** leads a band of younger players: the saxophonist Mark Turner, the bassist Ben Street, and the pianist Ethan Iverson, on a busman's holiday from the Bad Plus. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Poiret: King of Fashion,"** a survey of the career of the Parisian designer Paul Poiret (1879-1944), is at the Costume Institute through Aug. 5. ♦ **"Neo Rauch at the Met: Para"** presents new paintings by the Leipzig-based artist. Through Oct. 14. ♦ **"Impressionist and Early Modern Paintings: The Clark Brothers Collect."** Sibling rivalry was played out in galleries, studios, auction houses, and museums for Robert Sterling Clark (1877-1956), founder of the eponymous art institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and Stephen Carlton Clark (1882-1960), a noted trustee of and donor to the Met. This exhibit gathers the outstanding Cézannes, Seurats, Homers, Sargents, Picassos, and more that the brothers competed for and collected. Through Aug. 19. ♦ **"Frank Stella on the Roof."** Through Oct. 28. ♦ **"Frank Stella: Painting Into Architecture"** presents the prolific artist's designs for architectural structures. Through Aug. 5. ♦ **"Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797."** Through July 8. ♦ **"Barcelona and Modernity: Gaudí to Dalí."** Through June 3. ♦ **"Flowing Streams: Scenes from Japanese**

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
ALL INCLUSIVE

Among European makers of messy, welcome-to-my-world installations since Joseph Beuys and Dieter Roth—including the lately inevitable Thomas Hirschhorn and John Bock—the most appealing is Kai Althoff, a forty-one-year-old Cologne artist best known here for strong, soulful little paintings in a mélange of antique symbolist and Expressionist styles. Althoff and a Brooklyn graffiti artist, Nick Z, have brimmed the Gladstone gallery with pictures, sculptures, spray-paint tags, furniture, toys, a video, loose stuffs (fabrics, lumber, slathered makeup), and varied light. References to childhood, religion, love, and politics may be obscure, but a uniform tone of intelligent, even tasteful wonderment disarms.



In Althoff's hands, scattery installation becomes a mature art form, epitomizing the creative process between inspiration and completion, when all its options are in play. The show wryly demurs to the present art world with a central item: a purple-and-red paper cash register, its empty drawer stuck out like a panting tongue.

—*Peter Schjeldahl*

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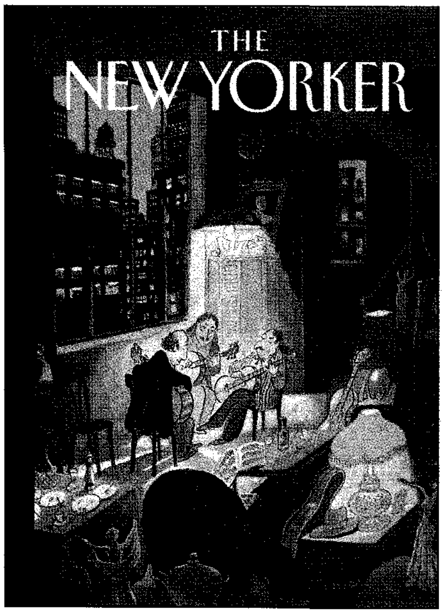
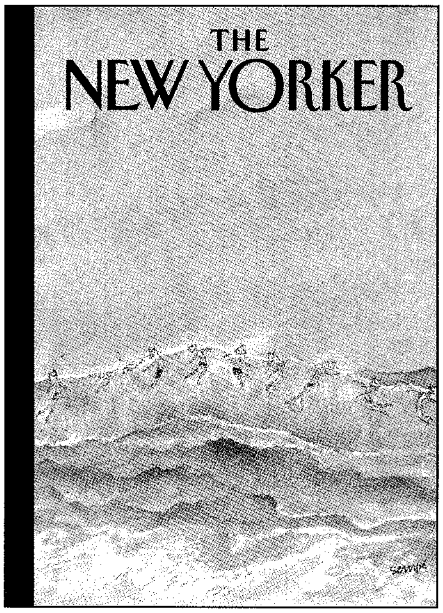


"Three Amigos"



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Art and Life." Through June 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—"**Richard Serra Sculpture: Forty Years.**" Opens June 3. ♦ "**Picasso's 'Demoiselles d'Avignon' at 100.**" "Monstrous, monolithic women, creatures like Alaskan totem poles, hacked out of solid, brutal colors, frightful, appalling!" Thus wrote Gelett Burgess in his 1910 essay "The Wild Men of Paris," describing his impressions after a visit to Picasso's studio. "Demoiselles," completed in 1907, bridges Picasso's Iberian style with his discovery of African art in the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro; the artist filled sixteen sketchbooks and made hundreds of preparatory drawings and paintings before arriving at the finished canvas. For the centenary, the famed painting of five prostitutes in a brothel in Barcelona has been moved to its own gallery and joined by related sketches and other paintings. It's a fairly modest birthday party, but one that offers a few insights into the artist's process, as well as tracking the Demoiselles' journey from Picasso's legendary Bateau-Lavoir studio to MOMA's collection in 1937. Through Aug. 27. ♦ "**Projects 85: Dan Perjovschi.**" Through Aug. 27. ♦ "**Comic Abstraction: Image Making, Image Breaking.**" Through June 11. ♦ "**Barry Frydlender: Place and Time.**" Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

"Crazy Love," a documentary portrait of an unusual married couple, opens June 1.

MICHAL CHELBIN

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—"**The Hugo Boss Prize 2006: Tacita Dean.**" Through June 6. ♦ The telescoping spiral of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim rotunda is in the midst of a summerlong restoration project, so it's a timely moment to consider how geometry sculpts the void. "**The Shapes of Space,**" installed in the lower tiers, culls works from the permanent collection and will evolve over the summer, moving upward as renovation progresses. The first installment is a primer on the abstract grid, glamourized with the addition of Alyson Shotz's undulating screen of lenticular films and Piotr Uklanski's flashing dance floor. A wildly multigenerational roster puts Ricci Albenda next to Naum Gabo and Piet Mondrian near Sarah Morris. Coming June 15, ramps three and four will extend to considerations of architectural and psychological space by Louise Bourgeois and Robert Gober, among others. On June 23, side galleries open with installations by Pipilotti Rist and Rirkrit Tiravanija while Matthew Ritchie takes over ramp six; finally, on July 13, ramp five will open with investigations of invented spaces by Aleksandra Mir, Tom Friedman, and Vasily Kandinsky, among others. Through Sept. 5. ♦ "**Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum: Restoring a Masterpiece.**" Through July 8. ♦ "**Divisionism/Neo-Impressionism: Arcadia and Anarchy.**" Through Aug. 6. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—"**Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era.**" Through Sept. 16. ♦ "**Lincoln Kirstein**" honors the late, great aesthete, connoisseur, and impresario on the centenary of his birth, with an exhibition of work by artists he championed, including Walker Evans, Elie Nadelman, and Pavel Tchelitchew. Through Aug. 27. ♦ "**Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure.**" Through June 3. ♦ "**Taryn Simon: An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar.**" Through June 24. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—"**Gold.**" Through Aug. 19. ♦ "**Mythic Creatures: Dragons, Unicorns, and Mermaids.**" Through Jan. 6. ♦ The newly opened Anne and Bernard Spitzer Hall of Human Origins explores the science of evolution. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—"**The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson: Constructing a Legend.**" Through Sept. 16. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—"**Van Gogh and Expressionism.**" Through July 2. (Open Thursdays, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

ROBERT HEINECKEN
"Image as Object 1961-1979" rounds up a choice group of Heinecken's early experimental work, still provocative after all these years. Although the material is based in the photographic image, it refuses to be limited by that medium, flirting with sculpture, collage, and cinematic sequencing and nearly always layering image on image. Heinecken's most famous pieces bleed both sides of a magazine page together, often in telling juxtapositions of bodies and commodities or sex and violence. A vitrine full of manipulated periodicals—some overprinted, others cut up to reveal several images at once—treats magazines as minefields ready to explode. Through June 16. (Roth, 160A E. 70th St. 212-717-9067.)

OSAMU KANEMURA
This Tokyo-based photographer takes pictures of Japanese city streets that emphasize their narrowness, density, and jumbled confusion. Printed in inky black-and-white, his work depicts scenes of almost overwhelming visual overload: signs, billboards, awnings, fake foliage, cars, bikes, and, strung just above it all, an insane tangle of wires and cables. Already alarmingly claustrophobic, Kanemura's images are so strangled by this overhead webbing that the pedestrians seem trapped. Like Lee Friedlander, Kanemura revels in the invigorating chaos of a city choking on its own excess. Through June 2. (Cohen Amador, 41 E. 57th St. 212-759-6740.)

"CONCEPTUAL PHOTOGRAPHY 1964-1989"
Conceptual photography can be deadly dull—the deliberately artless visualization of a painfully simple idea—and not all of the work in this sophisticated survey avoids that trap. But audacity, playfulness, and wit tend to subvert the didactic impulse here, perhaps because many of the artists focus on the body. Classics of the genre, including Bruce Nauman's rubber-faced "Studies for Holograms" and both versions of "Plank Piece," Charles Ray's self-portrait as sculpture, provide the ideal context for work by Ana Mendieta, John Baldessari, Dennis Oppenheim, Giuseppe Penone, and Laurie Simmons. And don't miss Gerhard Richter's mysterious six-panel piece, in which ghostly figures (plus the artist himself) haunt an empty room. Through June 23. (Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677.)

Short List

JOHN CONSTABLE: Salander-O'Reilly, 22 E. 71st St. 212-879-6606. Through June 16. **WILLEM DE KOONING:** Starr, 5 E. 73rd St. 212-570-1739. Through June 8. **"BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" / TAKASHI MURAKAMI:** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave. 212-744-2313. Through June 16 and June 9, respectively. **"A CENTURY AND A HALF IN THE ART BUSINESS":** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-535-5767. Through June 23. **"PICASSO, BRAQUE, AND EARLY FILM IN CUBISM":** PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through June 23.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

GLENN BROWN
The vestiges of Old Masters are everywhere in Brown's paintings—that's the whole point. Only, rather than copying, Brown remakes and dismantles them. Petrified versions of Boucher and Fragonard sit next to grotesque concoctions conjuring Redon, Ensor, and Bacon. Brown's primary access into these great paintings redux is similar to John Currin's: he simultaneously pays homage to and

pokes fun at painterly conventions. But where Currin's point of entry is form, Brown's is surface; every painting is a concoction of morbid, swirling patterns resembling oil spills. Painterly decadence is punctuated by punk-provocative titles like "Deep Throat," "The Sound of Music," and the deadpanning "Life Is Empty and Meaningless." Through June 9. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

JAMES CASEBERE

Casebere, who constructs and then photographs architectural scale models, began with pared-down, abstracted spaces (prison cells, penitentiaries, arcades), but he's been making more and more elaborate and believable environments of late. His most recent images were inspired by sites in Luxor, Samarra, and Istanbul and include two views of the interior of a domed mosque with arched windows and a suspended light fixture. The architecture remains simplified, but it's reproduced in such an overbearingly grand scale that the intimacy, mystery, and strange power Casebere's photographs once had is nearly lost. How can work this impressive and intriguing still be disappointing? Through June 23. (Sean Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181.)

ROB FISCHER

It's common, apparently, for the aluminum blades of small-plane propellers to be bent, cracked, and discarded. Fischer collects thirty-six of these, polishes them to a mirror finish, and sets them upright on a plinth like accidental Brancusis. The surface bling obscures the blades' origins, and at first they clash with the show's other works. These are a quasi-architectural sculpture made from cut-up planking salvaged from a high-school gymnasium, and a wall of photographs taken in the Minnesota woods, where a motion sensor lets passing deer and rabbits trip the shutter. A longer look connects the battered metal birds in space to both the flash-reflecting animal eyes and the Mondrianesque dashes of colored lines from the gym floor. Through June 16. (Cohan and Leslie, 138 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-206-8710.)

ANDY GOLDSWORTHY

Prior to the opening of his show, on May 8, Goldsworthy coated the gallery walls in white porcelain clay imported from his home town of Cornwall, England. Over the course of the exhibition, this sheathing has been drying, contracting, cracking, and falling from the walls in unpredictable patterns. A visit less than halfway through the run found scabrous patches on the walls and piles of thick, creamy shards already littering the floor, in a benign parable of neglect and demolition. A side gallery projects two short films in which Goldsworthy lies down on a rock in a rainstorm or snowstorm, leaving a "shadow" of dry space that, once he's moved, is gradually obliterated. Through June 16. (Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470.)

TOBIAS PUTRIH

Looking like an Ikea kit gone wildly astray, Putrih's installation fills the small project space at Protetch with a modular sculpture made of interlocking laminated-plywood parts. Shelves, tables, chairs, and screens proliferate into a streamlined construction that nods to Charles and Ray Eames, Buckminster Fuller, and other gurus of high-modernist functionalism. It's understandable, in a gallery context, that the sleek blond piece should be granted look-but-don't-touch status. It's unfortunate, however. Referencing factory production and tastemaking for the masses, the work was originally meant to be disassembled and reconfigured, used and toyed with by visitors. Through June 29. (511 W. 22nd St. 212-633-6999.)

ROBIN RHODE

In art, the trickster figure is often a menacing one—but the South African artist Rhode's wide-eyed version takes a different tack, combining sly political commentary with imaginative craft. In Rhode's characteristic mode, he makes drawings and interacts with them (you can see the influence of South African elder statesman William Kentridge). Here, the works are more object-based, as in a crate of empty beer bottles, their necks stretched into sinuous green fronds—or photographs of Rhode "playing Ping-Pong" on a table sprayed, graffiti-style, on a wall. The most captivating work is a video of a male dancer writhing to plaintive cello music next to a morphing drawing of a tree. The sights and sounds are unabashedly expressive, emotive, and achingly beautiful. Through June 23. (Rubenstein, 527 W. 23rd St.; 526 W. 24th St.; 534 W. 24th St. 212-627-8000.)

HAIM STEINBACH

Steinbach's work hasn't changed dramatically over the past two and a half decades. He's a bit like Mondrian: if you've got a rich, workable line of inquiry, why shift gears? And, like Mondrian, Steinbach's work still feels remarkably fresh and interesting. His current show is comprised, predictably, of objects displayed on minimalist-type shelves. Some are drawn from his standard repertoire of consumer objects, but others show the artist taking a formalist turn. Rubber and metal doohickeys (probably vital in some field or industry) are arranged in ways that force us to consider the old shape-volume-mass-color concepts. Several feel distinctly modernist; these could be the result of a trip to the shopping mall with Brancusi. Through June 30. (Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 212-627-1018.)

Short List

KAI ALTHOFF AND NICK Z: Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300. Through June 16. **ASSUME VIVID ASTRO FOCUS:** Connelly, 625 W. 27th St. 212-337-9563. Through June 30. **TIM HAWKINSON:** PaceWildenstein, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-989-4258. Through June 9. **MR.:** Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923. Through June 23. **JOAN MITCHELL:** Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through June 16. **MIKE QUINN:** Buia, 541 W. 23rd St. 212-366-9915. Through June 9.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

FRANCESCO CLEMENTE

Some one hundred works from the seventies—paintings, drawings, photographs, and prints—track the early career of the Italian neo-expressionist. Soldiers stand at attention next to bottles of Fanta; bodies contort in complicated erotic scenarios; turreted buildings are overdrawn with mysterious, evocative emblems like wine bottles and keys. Hints of the influence of the friends and mentors who functioned as his art school—particularly Alighiero e Boetti, Joseph Beuys, and Luigi Ontani—appear throughout. Through June 2. (Deitch, 76 Grand St. 212-343-7300.)

Short List

TINA BARNEY: Borden, 560 Broadway. 212-431-0166. Through June 16. **GEORG BASELITZ:** Nolan, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-925-6190. Through June 30. **TIM HAWKINSON:** Nyehaus, 15 Gramercy Park S. 212-995-1785. Through June 16. **"BEYOND THE WHITE CUBE: A RETROSPECTIVE OF BRIAN O'DOHERTY/PATRICK IRELAND":** Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780. Through July 14.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET

The sixth week of the company's spring season owes much to its co-founder Lincoln Kirstein, whose centennial year this is. Take the program "International Balanchine": "Bugaku" (1963), Balanchine's formal portrayal of a Japanese marriage ritual, was inspired by the style of the Gagaku Company of the Imperial Household, which Kirstein brought to New York in 1959. It will be performed alongside "Serenade," Balanchine's first ballet for American dancers, from 1934, the year after Kirstein convinced the young Georgian to come to America. And the evening's closing piece, "Union Jack" (1976)—a tongue-in-cheek tribute to British pageantry that opens with the stirring entrance of seven kilt-wearing regiments—is a testament to Kirstein's Anglophilia. ♦ May 30 and June 5 at 7:30 and June 3 at 3: "Serenade," "Bugaku," and "Union Jack." ♦ May 31 and June 2 at 8: "In G Major," "Dances at a Gathering," and "I'm Old Fash-

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
HEARD IN THE STREET

Between "The Godfather" (1972) and "The Godfather, Part II" (1974), Francis Ford Coppola wrote and directed a small-scale thriller, "The Conversation," which, like

Hitchcock's "Rear Window," is an authentic American classic of voyeurism and paranoia. Gene Hackman, in glasses and a mustache, is the repressed, unhappy Harry Caul, a surveillance expert who trains multiple microphones on an adulterous couple (Frederic Forrest and Cindy Williams) meeting in San Francisco's Union Square. Their conversation, which Harry pieces together in a virtuoso sequence (Walter Murch did the sound design), takes strange turns that suggest a mysterious combination of fear and aggression. As Harry gets pulled into the couple's fate, the movie becomes a landscape of his unconscious and culminates in one of the most shocking images ever to appear in a non-horror film. Coppola brought ebullient family feeling to "The Godfather," but he also understands the melancholy seductions and pains of solitude. Playing at MOMA on June 1.

—*David Denby*

ioned." ♦ June 1 at 8: "Concerto Barocco," "Tribute," and "Brandenburg." ♦ June 2 at 2: "Mozartiana," "Piano Pieces," and "Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 2." (Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 24.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
The week opens with the final performances of Balanchine's "Symphonie Concertante" (the lovely Maria Riccetto will début as one of the two female leads on May 29) paired with Frederick Ashton's brilliant one-act piece "The Dream" (with Herman Cornejo as Puck on May 28 and May 30 at 2, not to be missed). Then the wraps will come off of this season's world première, a lavish new production of the Tchaikovsky/Petipa ballet "The Sleeping Beauty," staged by the company's director, Kevin McKenzie, with the former N.Y.C.B. and A.B.T. ballerina Gelsey Kirkland (famous for her Aurora) and Kirkland's husband, the Australian director and ballet master Michael Chernov. The glamorous Veronika Part and Marcelo Gomes will dance Aurora and Désiré on opening night, with Gillian Murphy as their Lilac Fairy. ♦ May 28-29 and May 31 at 8 and May 30 at 2 and 8: "Symphonie Concertante" and "The Dream." ♦ June 1 and June 4-5 at 8 and June 2 at 2 and 8: "The Sleeping Beauty." (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000. Through July 7.)

MOMIX
At the Joyce, Moses Pendleton's amazingly flexible, strong, and willing dancers present "MOMIX Remix," a best-of anthology from the past quarter century. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 29-30 and June 5 at 7:30, May 31-June 1 at 8, June 2 at 2 and 8, and June 3 at 2 and 7:30. Through June 10.)

WALLY CARDONA QUARTET
In Cardona's "SITE," the dancers, like soloists, act separately, their interactions seeming serendipitous. Eventually, they come together to build cantilevered structures, suspenseful and moving in their precariousness. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 29-June 2 at 7:30.)

"MECH[A]OUTPUT"
As part of the Japan Society's "Noh-Now!" series and its technology showcase "Tech Epoch," the choreographer Koosil-Ja—born and raised in Osaka, of Korean descent, and a sometime Wooster Group collaborator—will perform elements of the highly stylized classical choreography of "Dojoji," a well-known Noh play about revenge, in the context of three-dimensional projections. With a live sound design by Geoff Matters. (333 E. 47th St. 212-715-1258. May 31-June 2 at 7:30.)

HILARY EASTON + COMPANY
Easton is a member of that dangerous species Choreographers with Ideas. Yet far better than most, she understands how to convey her concepts by means of dance. Often, she does this by translating her themes directly into dance problems; her new "It's All True" illustrates the fallibility of memory by passing a movement sequence from dancer to dancer, telephone-game style. Just as typically, though, the work is equally a love story: one man's romanticized memories of an affair are challenged, even coöpted, by the group. The effect is comic and wistful, in tune with Thomas Cabaniss's original score. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. May 31-June 2 at 8 and June 3 at 3.)

BEN MUNISTERI DANCE PROJECTS
The grant-application selling point of "Terra Nova" is its backdrop—animated landscapes that are tied to the choreography, vaguely, through motion-capture technology. The choreography itself is typical Munisteri, lucid and ingenious, a bright and brave new world of dance invention. Similarly clean craftsmanship marks the rest of the program: last year's much praised Stravinsky study, "Tuesday, 4 A.M.," and "Smash Through to Sunlight," the exuberant light-and-shadow play from 1999. (Dance New Amsterdam, 280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-279-4200. May 31-June 2 at 8 and June 3 at 3.)

MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY
The venerable, beleaguered troupe opens "Sitelines," the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's summer series of free outdoor performances, most fittingly, with "Steps in the Street" and "Prelude to Action." These sections of "Chronicle," Graham's 1936 response to the Spanish Civil War, never fail to stun. When the all-female cast starts leaping in a circle, like figures on a Greek vase, the effect is monumental, even when the piece is not set against the backdrop of the Stock Exchange building. (Wall St. at Broad St. 212-219-9401. June 1-3 at 12:30.)

JENNY ROCHA/ROCHA DANCE THEATER/ JASON AND LINDSEY DIETZ MARCHANT
In a shared evening presented by Danspace Project, Rocha premières "Just Barely . . .," an emotional striptease of a solo, and "Pretty Perfect Plastic," a comic duet between an obsessed beautician and her unfortunate client. For their part, the Dietz Marchants offer "Inflatable Man, Evaporating Woman," their take on the identity merging, precarious balances, thrills, and disappointments of couplehood. (St. Marks In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. June 1-3 at 8:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

ANNA NETREBKO AND DMITRI HVOROSTOVSKY
The current queen of Russian opera, making her Carnegie Hall début, joins her more seasoned (and equally persuasive) colleague for an evening of operatic arias and duets by Gounod, Bizet, Leoncavallo, Rimsky-Korsakov (Marfa's Act II aria from "The Tsar's Bride"), and Tchaikovsky (Yeletsky's aria from "Pique Dame" and the closing scene of "Eugene Onegin"); Asher Fisch conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (212-247-7800. May 30 at 8.)

MIDAMERICA PRODUCTIONS: MASCAGNI'S "ZANETTO"
Mascagni, perhaps the ultimate verismo composer, left many tantalizing works beyond "Cavalleria Rusticana," and devotees are always happy to give them another chance. Peter Tiboris is the latest to revive this tender one-act opera, which has not been heard in New York since 1902. He conducts his Manhattan Philharmonic and the Russian Chamber Chorus of New York in a concert version starring the mezzo-soprano Jennifer Larmore (in the *travesti* title role) and Eilana Lappalainen, part of an evening that will also include performances of arias and scenes from operas by Verdi, Donizetti, and Cilea. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. June 4 at 8.)

AMATO OPERA: "FALSTAFF"
Anthony Amato's storied opera company, a doughty mix of professionals and amateurs, performs Verdi's big-boned comedy in its tiny, old-time venue on the Lower East Side. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. June 2 at 7:30 and June 3 at 2:30. Through June 24.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel, exploring the symphonic music of Brahms this season, brings his grand cycle to an end this week. The first of two programs is straightforward: performances of the Symphonies No. 3 (his most romantic and subjective) and No. 4 (the essence of tragedy, and a summit of pure technique). (May 31 at 7:30 and June 1 at 11 A.M.) ♦ For a finale, Maazel conducts the jaunty "Haydn Variations" and the majestic "German Requiem" (with the soprano Celena Shafer, the baritone Matthias Goerne, and the New York Choral Artists). (June 2 at 8 and June 5 at 7:30.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

POLYHYMNIA
Music based on the Song of Songs by Nicolas Gombert, a master of flowing counterpoint and piquant dissonance who remains a dark horse of sixteenth-century music, will be the emphasis of the next concert by the early-music choir, which is in residence at the Church of St. Ignatius of Antioch. (West End Ave. at 87th St. 917-838-4636. June 2 at 8.)

JOHN RITTER

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Leon Botstein and his intrepid orchestra wind up another adventurous season with an afternoon devoted to two major figures of Soviet music. Shostakovich's Symphony No. 13, "Babi Yar," a setting of Yevtushenko's famous poem about the Nazi massacre of Jews in the Ukraine (featuring the renowned baritone Sergei Leiferkus), will be preceded by the Symphony No. 6 and the Trumpet Concerto (with Carl Albach) of the composer's good friend Mieczyslaw Weinberg, whose music is only beginning to be known in the West. The Concert Chorale of New York and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus assist. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. June 3 at 3.)

RECITALS

AUSTRIAN CULTURAL FORUM
The young American baritone Thomas Meglioranza has become a critics' darling for his mellifluous voice and sterling diction. He performs, along with the pianist Thomas Bagwell, songs by two of his favorite composers of the early twentieth century, Korngold and Eisler, and by two more obscure figures, Karl Weigl and Joseph Marx. (11 E. 52nd St. May 29 and May 31 at 8. To reserve free tickets, which are required, call 212-319-5300, ext. 222.)

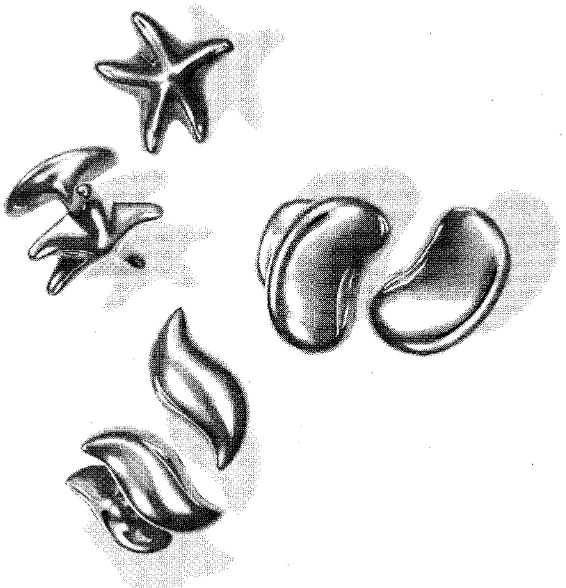
BARGEMUSIC
Diversity, a welcome aspect of Mark Peskanov's new directorship, marks the week's lineup at the floating chamber-music series. May 30 and June 1 at 8: The Sonar Players, a new contemporary-music group (including such expert young players as the flutist Patti Monson and the pianist Steven Beck), perform a recital devoted to the American master George Crumb that includes such classics as "Vox Balaenae (Voice of the Whale)" and the string quartet "Black Angels." ♦ June 2 at noon and 8 and June 3 at 4: Peskanov, a violinist, teams up with Beck to perform sonatas for violin and piano by Mozart and Grieg. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

EMERSON STRING QUARTET
Stunning new string quartets seem to arrive on the scene every year, but this longtime American foursome still rules the roost. They close the Carnegie Hall season with a round of "Perspectives" concerts, centering on Beethoven, which begins this week. May 31 at 8: Quartets by Haydn, Mozart (the "Dissonant"), and Beethoven (the third of the "Razumovsky" Quartets). ♦ June 3 at 5: An all-Beethoven program consisting of the Six Quartets, Op. 18, the composer's first essays in the genre. ♦ June 5 at 8: The first of the "Razumovsky" Quartets is at the center of a concert that begins with Mendelssohn's Quartet No. 2 in A Minor and concludes with Schubert's Quartet No. 14, "Death and the Maiden." (212-247-7800.)

COUNTER)INDUCTION
Bartók's "Contrasts," for clarinet, violin, and piano, will be the anchor work for the ensemble's final concert of the season, an event that will also feature pieces by Roberto Sierra and Karel Husa as well as premières from Douglas Boyce (the Piano Quartet) and Kyle Bartlett; the performers include the violist Jessica Meyer and the pianist Blair McMillen. (Tenri Cultural Institute, 43A W. 13th St. June 1 at 8. A donation is suggested.)

**ISSUE PROJECT ROOM:
ANNEA LOCKWOOD AND DION WORKMAN**
Two composers—the first an icon of American experimentalism, the second a sound artist from New Zealand—have the run of the Gowanus concert space's sixteen-channel Hemisphere speaker system, which they will use to create unique versions of their most recent works. (400 Carroll St., Brooklyn. 718-330-0313. June 1 at 8.)

**ST. LUKE'S CHAMBER ENSEMBLE:
"NOTABLE WOMEN"**
Joan Tower is the curator of this three-week festival; the first concert features the world première of Asha Srinivasan's "By the River Near Savathi" along with works by notable women composers



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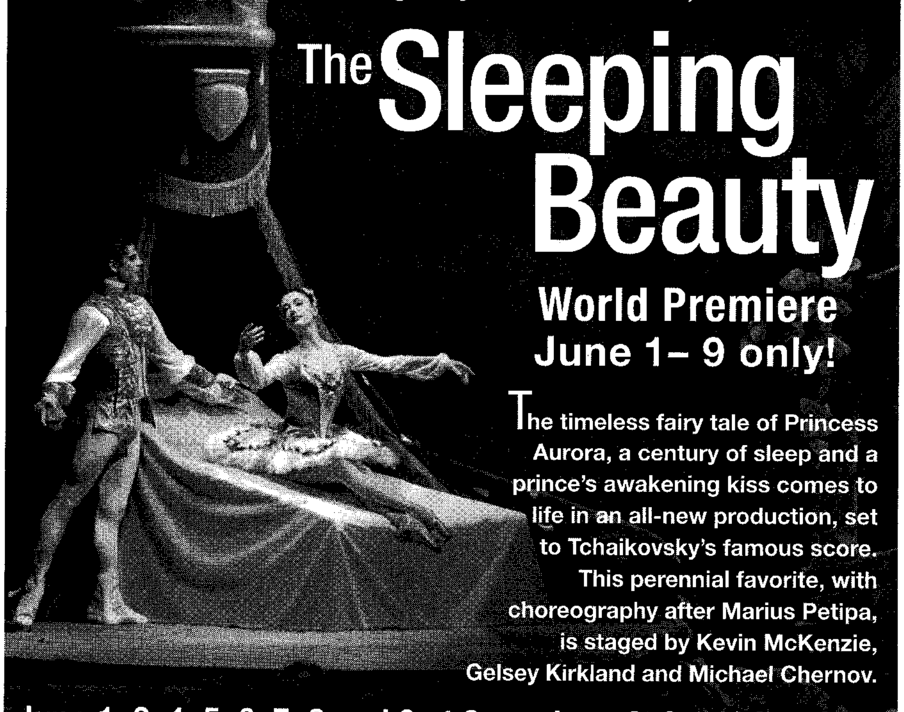

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The Sleeping Beauty
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The timeless fairy tale of Princess Aurora, a century of sleep and a prince's awakening kiss comes to life in an all-new production, set to Tchaikovsky's famous score. This perennial favorite, with choreography after Marius Petipa, is staged by Kevin McKenzie, Gelsey Kirkland and Michael Chernov.

June 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 at 8pm; June 2, 6 and 9 at 2pm

Veronika Part and Marcelo Gomes in *The Sleeping Beauty*. Photo by Gene Schiavone.

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of the past—Amy Beach, Rebecca Clarke, Ruth Crawford Seeger (the magnificent String Quartet), and Miriam Gideon. (Chelsea Art Museum, Eleventh Ave. at 22nd St. 212-594-6100. June 2 at 2. ♦ Note: The concert will be repeated upstate at Dia:Beacon on June 3. See www.notablewomen.org.)

BANG ON A CAN MARATHON

New York's new-music fanatics might have grown blasé about "marathon" concerts, but this one will be different: twenty-six hours of performances by a dizzying variety of musicians—Ethel, the Books, Eighth Blackbird, Iva Bittová, Yo La Tengo and the Bang on a Can All-Stars, to name just a few—offering music by Andriessen, Reich, Ustvolskaya, Gordon, Byron, Wolfe, Varèse, and many others in the Winter Garden of the World Financial Center. (Battery Park City. June 2 at 8. No tickets required.)

LES ZEPHIRES: "LA COQUETTE"

The Baroque instrumental ensemble, which started out at New York University, offers a program of French fancies by such composers as Rameau, Loeillet, and Caix d'Hervelois at St. Michael's Episcopal Church. (Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. June 3 at 3. No tickets required.)

IMANI WINDS

Josephine Baker—singer, dancer, actress, French patriot, and muse—may have done her best work in Paris, but she looms large in the history of the Harlem Renaissance. The dynamic group of African-American and Latina wind players pays tribute to her on what would have been her hundred-and-first birthday with a program of music, dance, and film at the Apollo Theatre. (253 W. 125th St. 212-531-5305. June 3 at 4.)

"THE MOVADO HOUR"

This inviting salon series at the Baryshnikov Arts Center, curated by the pianist Pedja Muzijevic, concludes its season with Muzijevic joining the soprano Lucy Shelton and the Brentano String Quartet for a program consisting of George Crumb's haunting Walt Whitman cycle, "Apparition," and Brahms's Piano Quintet. (37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. June 5 at 7. To reserve free tickets, which are required, call 917-934-4966.)

BRUCE LEVINGSTON: "SATIE AND THE CINEMA"

René Clair's seminal silent film "Entr'acte" (1924) features not only cameos by Duchamp, Picabia, and Man Ray but an arresting score by Erik Satie, which the elegant and engaging pianist will play along with a showing of the film. Also on the program are selections from such Satie jewels as "Gnossiennes" and "Gymnopédies" and a complete performance of "Sports et Divertissements." (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100. June 5 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

CRAZY LOVE

Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 1. (In limited release.)

DAY WATCH

In this sequel to the fantasy "Night Watch," Moscow is devastated and rebuilt by a savior. Directed by Timur Bekmambetov. In Russian. Opening June 1. (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

GRACIE

In this inspirational drama by Davis Guggenheim, a teen-age girl fights for the right to play competitive soccer. Opening June 1. (In wide release.)

KNOCKED UP

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 1. (In wide release.)

MR. BROOKS

A thriller, directed by Bruce A. Evans, about a serial killer (Kevin Costner) with an alter ego (William Hurt). Co-starring Demi Moore and Dane Cook. Opening June 1. (In wide release.)

TEN CANOES

A drama based on oral traditions of an Australian Aboriginal community. Directed by Rolf de Heer. Opening June 1. (Cinema Village.)

NOW PLAYING

AWAY FROM HER

Julie Christie is sixty-six, but her face hasn't lost its beautiful definition—the downward-turning mouth, the slightly pointed chin, the eyes that can explode with wrath. Her temperament hasn't fallen out of shape, either. As Fiona, an Ontario woman succumbing to Alzheimer's, she seems quite lost one second but then, as an intention pierces through a cloud of unhappiness, becomes crisp and incisive. Christie, turning a medical condition into a dramatic coup, makes it impossible for us merely to feel sorry for Fiona, and that toughness gives the film the abrupt, challenging intelligence of a fresh and exploratory work rather than the soft piteousness of, say, a "Movie of the Week" from 1973. With Gordon Pinsent, the veteran Canadian actor, who has a capacious gut, a fine beard, and the burnished aspect of an aging lion, as Grant, Fiona's longtime husband; Michael Murphy as the stricken man whom Fiona falls in love with at an assisted-living facility; and Olympia Dukakis as the practical old broad who gives Grant a way to remain loyal yet survive as a man. The young Canadian actress Sarah Polley adapted the Alice Munro story "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" and also directed the movie, with attention to the human mysteries and a feeling for the spiritual meaning of landscape. In all, a minor triumph.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 5/14/07.) (In wide release.)

CRAZY LOVE

The general contours of the strange story told in this uproarious documentary are familiar: in 1959, Burton Pugach, a thirtyish Bronx attorney, hired thugs to throw lye in the face of Linda Riss, the young woman who spurned him. In 1974, after his release from prison, she married him. Yet the more twists and turns of their peculiar destinies the director, Daniel Klores, reveals, the more marvelous and depressing their story becomes. Klores interviews Pugach and Riss at length, as well as seemingly everyone the two have ever known, and hearing their frank accounts of the most intimate details of these sordid circumstances and troubled lives is like spending an hour and a half marinating in pickle brine. Besides telling a ripping yarn that fully justifies the title, the film goes far to dispel sentimental myths of the sweeter, simpler fifties.—*Richard Brody* (In limited release.)

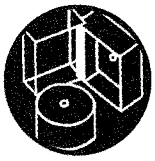
FAY GRIM

Nine years after "Henry Fool," Hal Hartley delivers a curious sequel. The disreputable Henry (Thomas Jay Ryan) has gone missing; he is either dead or in Europe, if you consider that a choice. Simon Grim (James Urbaniak), the garbage-man poet of Woodside, Queens, is in prison, despite his Nobel Prize, while his ditzy sister Fay (Parker Posey) struggles to raise her difficult teen-age son (Liam Aiken). The stalemate is broken when a C.I.A. man (Jeff Goldblum, the best thing in the movie) declares an interest in Henry's private notebooks, thus triggering a quest that will suck in Simon's publisher (Chuck Montgomery), a beautiful Israeli spy (Saffron Burrows), and other interested parties. Fay travels to Paris and thence to Istanbul, but with every step the story loses power, as we come to realize that Hartley, the laureate of dysfunctional suburbia, is unwisely broadening his horizons. He even seems to believe his own MacGuffin, and the result is a halfhearted and implausible thriller; would Henry, a devout littérateur, really find himself on the fringes of Islamic jihad?—*Anthony Lane* (5/21/07) (In wide release.)

ONCE

In John Carney's amiable folk-pop musical meditation on the male musician's ego, the talented Glen Hansard (of the Irish band the Frames)

DVD NOTES IN BLACK AND WHITE



The social and political upheavals of the nineteen-sixties are the subject of an extraordinary trio of new releases—a pair of documentaries by Mike Gray and Howard Alk, made in Chicago in the heat of the moment and released by Facets, and **"The Hours and Times"** (Choices), a 1991 drama directed by Christopher Münch.

"American Revolution 2," from 1969, begins with an unfamiliar view of familiar events, the demonstrations during the Democratic National Convention of 1968. With cameras in the center of the action, the filmmakers capture the disciplined crowd, under the leadership of Dick Gregory, defying arrest to challenge the strict limits placed by officials on the route of the march—which, the film suggests, was banned from passing through black neighborhoods for fear that it would grow too large for the police to control. But the film takes a surprising turn when, in the wake of those media-saturated events, poor whites form the Young Patriots, a radical group that joins with a remarkably Jeffersonian Black Panther activist, Bob Lee. Motivated by police brutality (which they saw not in terms of race but of class) and urban renewal undertaken without the input of residents, they put revolutionary rhetoric aside and lurch toward constructive political action, bringing about the sort of community-based dialogue with officials which has, since then, become standard practice.

"The Murder of Fred Hampton," from 1971, offers an altogether more electrifying and menacing view of the Panthers. Structured as a flashback, it begins with an official police reconstruction of the 1969 raid in which Hampton, the chairman of the Illinois branch of the Black Panther Party, was killed. It then cuts to him and Bobby Seale, prior to the Chicago Eight trial, addressing their followers in a church with the incantatory charm of preachers, but promising to teach "revolutionary principles" and the "proper tactics" for killing "pigs." Alk and Gray depict these plans for armed insurrection as heroic; though the Panthers' hip political rhetoric exerted a powerful allure at the time, this pair of films suggests that their most enduring legacy may well be their most pacific one.

The Beatles sang derisively about revolution, but by that time they had already changed the world. "The Hours and Times" subtly and meticulously fictionalizes a weekend in 1963 when John Lennon and Brian Epstein, the Beatles' manager and guiding spirit, travelled together to Barcelona. Münch, filming with no crew and little money, brings them all to life with a miraculous plausibility: Epstein (David Angus) is touchingly anguished in his frustrated attraction to Lennon (Ian Hart), whose free-spirited and spontaneous intelligence he prized with a unique sympathy and channelled to epochal effect. Dancing with a stewardess (Stephanie Pack) in his hotel room, Lennon exhibits the inner freedom and exuberance that he was soon to make a universal gift.

—*Richard Brody*

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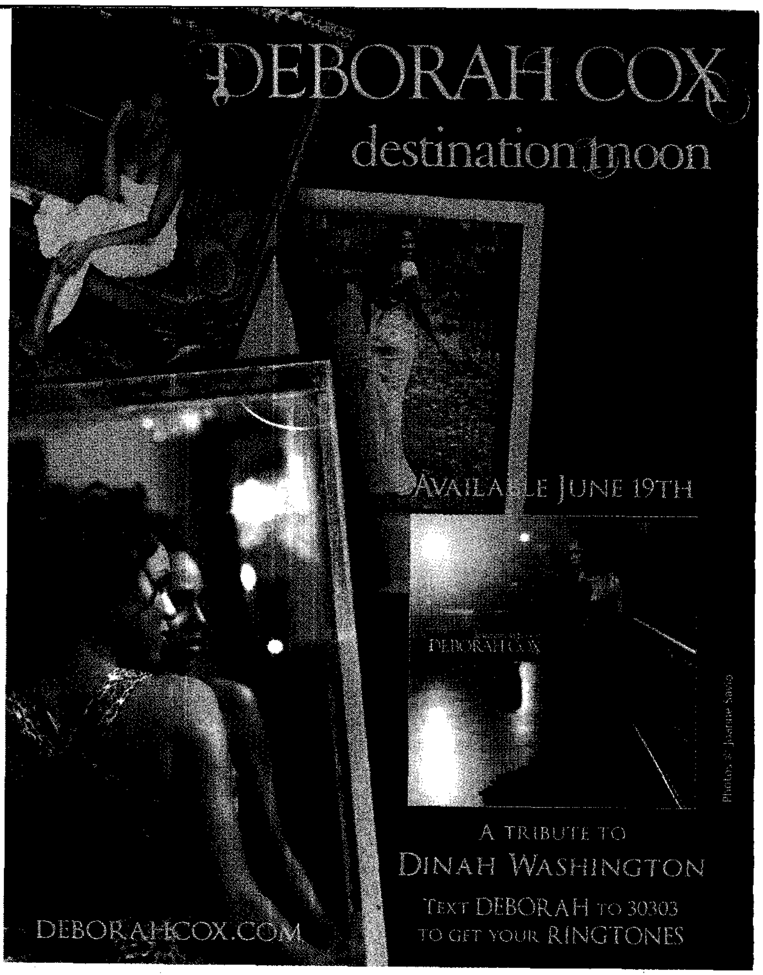

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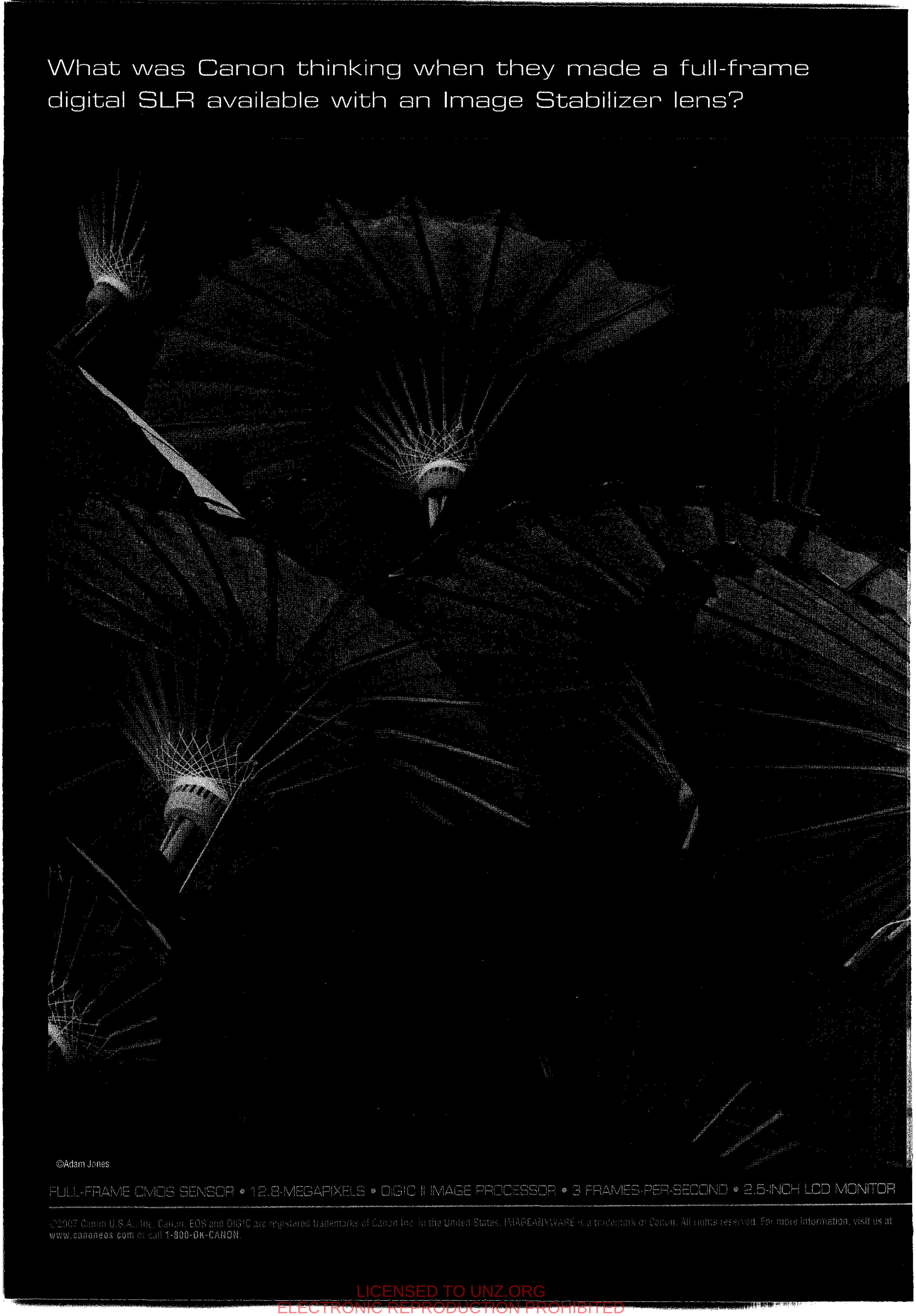

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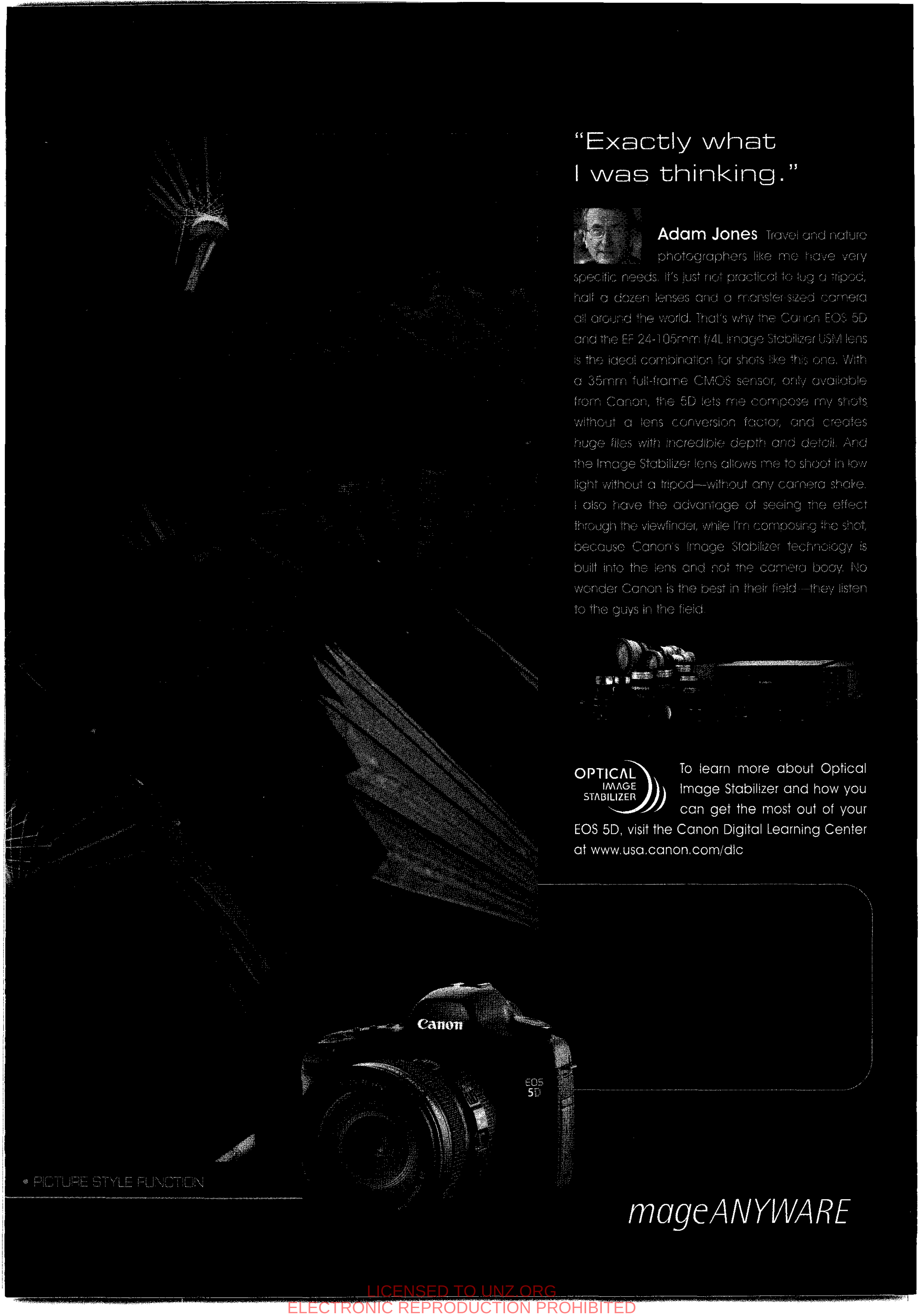

“Exactly what
I was thinking.”

Adam Jones Travel and nature photographers like me have very specific needs. It's just not practical to lug a tripod, half a dozen lenses and a monster-sized camera all around the world. That's why the Canon EOS 5D and the EF 24-105mm f/4L Image Stabilizer USM lens is the ideal combination for shots like this one. With a 35mm full-frame CMOS sensor, only available from Canon, the 5D lets me compose my shots without a lens conversion factor, and creates huge files with incredible depth and detail. And the Image Stabilizer lens allows me to shoot in low light without a tripod—without any camera shake. I also have the advantage of seeing the effect through the viewfinder, while I'm composing the shot, because Canon's Image Stabilizer technology is built into the lens and not the camera body. No wonder Canon is the best in their field—they listen to the guys in the field.

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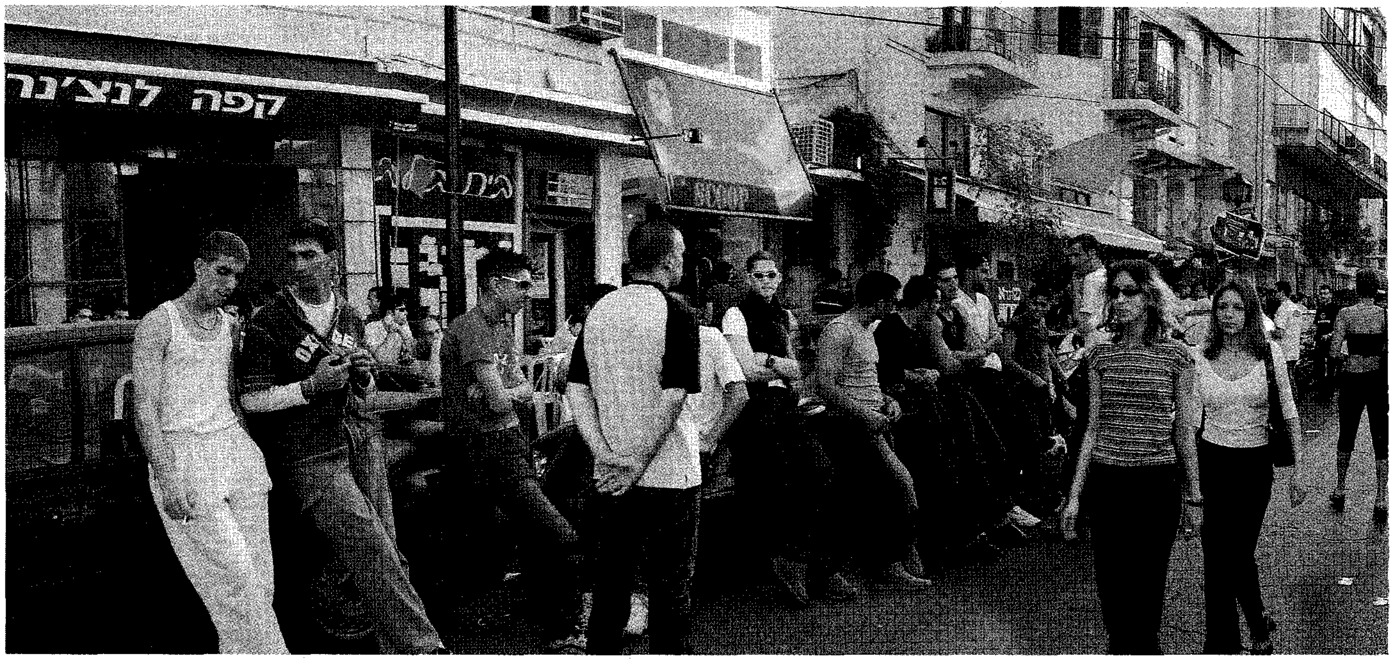


Barry Frydlender's large-scale photographs are digitally assembled from dozens or even hundreds of individual shots. Ten recent exampl

stars as Guy, a vacuum-cleaner repairman who performs his songs on the streets of Dublin. Markéta Irglová shines as a nuanced Czech émigré who recognizes Guy's spirit and inspires him with her own musical artistry. It doesn't get much sweeter than this, but Carney avoids cloying sentiment and renders his characters believably—and adorably—idealistic. Every time Hansard and Irglová start to play, we sit back and enjoy, and hope they succeed.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

PAPRIKA
A dazzling example of the Japanese art of anime, set in the adult business world of long white corridors, glass walls, and research labs. It's a Freudian-Jungian-Felliniesque sci-fi thriller and an outright challenge to its American viewers, who may, in the face of its whirligig complexity, feel rather pea-brained. Paprika, the heroine, is an eighteen-year-old sprite—a kind of sexy Japanese Tinkerbell—who enters people's dreams in order to perform therapy on them. The connection between dreams and movies is worked to a fare-thee-well, but there are other levels of representation, too—Internet sites, which characters enter bodily, and a kind of collective unconscious, appearing now and then, in which a parade of toys and icons (including the Statue of Liberty) march through an enormous city with a menacing, throbbing insistence that borders on the fascistic. Directed by Satoshi Kon, who mixes drawn and digital materials, and based on a novel by the science-fiction writer Yasutaka Tsutsui. In Japanese.—*D.D.* (5/28/07) (In wide release.)

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

PRIVATE PROPERTY
Joachim Lafosse's domestic sketch is uplifted by the performance of Isabelle Huppert as Pascale, a divorced mother of grown fraternal twins—the volatile Thierry (Jérémie Renier) and the docile François (Yannick Renier). The young men circle their adoring mother like wolf cubs, wrestling and waiting for her to feed them. But Pascale wreaks havoc when she brings home a new boyfriend and mentions a vague plan to sell the house and open a B. and B. Jéremie Renier (who played a similar character in "L'Enfant") excels as the juvenile, testosterone-fuelled man-boy, and the riveting Huppert portrays Pascale as a sheltered, spoiled woman whose attempt to overcome her lifelong passivity meets its inevitable consequences. In French.—*S.L.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

SHOCK CORRIDOR
A primal yawp of homespun surrealism. The director Samuel Fuller, spat out of Hollywood at the height of his career when B movies yielded to television, showed them what they were missing with this frenetic masterwork of threadbare pulp hysterics. The setup alone is a harrowing hoot: Johnny Barrett (Peter Breck), a journalist looking to solve a murder committed in a mental hospital, impersonates a sex maniac in order to get himself locked up there. His girlfriend, Cathy (Constance Towers), a stripper (whose routines cater to the movie's grind-house audience), is reluctantly in on the setup, pretending to be the sister he claims to lust after. But her fears prove well founded when, from imitating madness, Johnny begins to crack up. Fuller uses internal monologues and optical effects—as well as clips from his own earlier films—to suggest the patients' lurid delusions, but, tellingly, most of the pathologies are political: a racist soldier believes he's a Confederate general, a black man who suffered greatly down South now thinks he's founded the K.K.K., a nuclear scientist frightened by his weaponry is reduced to a childlike state. The resulting pageant of shrieking, shouting, singing, and slugging, all for a liberal cause, lays bare Fuller's own divided consciousness, torn between the excitement and the horror of violence. Released in 1963.—*R.B.* (Moving Image; June 2-3.)

SHREK THE THIRD
Postmodernism for moppets, pastiche for the potty-trained. As in the first two installments of this most lucrative of animated franchises, many of the jokes are media-wise parodies—in particular, potshots at such Disney fairy-tale characters as Rapunzel and Sleeping Beauty. The "Shrek" series has been funny, but its odd way of entertaining the kids with derision before they've been ravished by awe makes one a little sick. In this movie, Shrek (Mike Myers), eager to avoid the duties of kingship in Far, Far Away, goes on a quest to find a substitute—Fiona's cousin Arthur, or Artie (Justin Timberlake), who turns out to be a student at Worcestershire Academy, a sort of medieval Burbank High in which snarky kids in jerkins smoke frankincense and myrrh. The plot isn't as strong as in the first two movies—if anything, it feels a little desperate—and Eddie Murphy and Antonio Banderas, who sparked "Shrek" and "Shrek 2," respectively, as Donkey and Puss in Boots, are not used as centrally here. But the snide Rupert Everett is quite splendid as the arch-loser, Prince Charming. Dreamworks' "three-dimensional" animation makes the characters look like rubber bathtub toys. Directed by Chris Miller.—*D.D.* (5/28/07) (In wide release.)

SPIDER-MAN 3
The third and least of the series so far. Tobey Maguire, looking ever more costive and uncomfortable, returns as Peter Parker, who finds himself doubly transformed—first, into the crime-busting arachnid whom we know and revere, and, second, into a black-suited alternative who revels in violence and, for some unknown reason, keeps breaking into dance moves. He is paired with a distracted Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst) and, briefly and more entertainingly, with Gwen Stacy (Bryce Dallas Howard), who looks like a villain waiting to happen. For the moment, we have to make do with a couple of dullards: the New Goblin (James Franco), warmed up from the previous films, and Venom (Topher Grace), a frustrated hack consumed by an extra-terrestrial compound. All this is orchestrated by the director, Sam Raimi, with a halting, scatter-shot approach that verges on panic. The only person to emerge from the wreckage with any credit is Thomas Haden Church, who finds a grainy, melancholic streak in the unstoppable Sandman.—*A.L.* (5/7/07) (In wide release.)

THE SPY IN BLACK
The first collaboration of the director Michael Powell and the screenwriter Emeric Pressburger was a polished, stirring First World War thriller. Conrad Veidt embodies nobility and command as a gallant German submarine skipper on an espionage mission to the base of the British North Sea Fleet. Valerie Hobson is a double agent posing as an Orkneys schoolmistress. She mixes it up romantically with Veidt and an embittered British Navy officer (Sebastian Shaw); the Germans' attempt at sabotage pivots on this romantic triangle. Released in 1939, a year and a half after Pressburger wrote the script (reworking Roland Pertwee's adaptation of a novel by J. Storer Clouston), the movie gained an unexpectedly urgent topicality when Hitler's U-boats began sinking British ships, including one in the Orkneys. Seen today, it's civilized escapism: even when the action turns explosive and the characters volatile, you're entertained rather than assaulted.—*Michael Sragow* (MOMA; June 3.)

WAITRESS
Adrienne Shelly wrote and directed this winning comedy (sadly, her last), starring Keri Russell as Jenna, a small-town waitress and expert pie baker married to a freakishly controlling husband (Jer-

emy Sisto). When, to Jenna's dismay, she gets pregnant, she drowns her sorrows by baking inventive desserts with names like Bad Baby Pie and begins a torrid affair with her handsome, bland gynecologist (Nathan Fillion). The able supporting cast includes Andy Griffith (as the curmudgeonly diner owner), Cheryl Hines and Shelly (as Jenna's sparky waitress friends), and Eddie Jemison (as a nerdy suitor), and Russell conveys Jenna's bleak world with a pretty, expressionless face. Shelly deftly achieves a tone pitched between fantasy and reality, its levity belying an astute and humane study of an unhappy relationship steeped in inertia.—*S.L.* (In wide release.)

4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Fifth Empire" (2004, Oliveira; in Portuguese).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Films from the Sundance Film Festival. June 1 at 6 and June 2 at 12:30: "War/Dance" (2006, Sean Fine and Andrea Nix Fine). ♦ June 1 at 9 and June 2 at 6: "Snow Angels" (2006, David Gordon Green). ♦ June 1 at midnight: "Rocket Science" (2006, Jeffrey Blitz). ♦ June 2 at 3:15 and June 5 at 9:40: "The Great World of Sound" (2006, Craig Zobel). ♦ June 2 at 8:45: "Delirious" (2006, Tom DiCillo).♦ June 2 at 11:30: "Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten" (2006, Julien Temple).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Still Moving." June 1 at 6: "Blackmail" (1929, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ June 1 at 8: "The Conversation" (1974, Francis Ford Coppola). ♦ Through June 18: "To Save and Project." June 1 at 7: "Faces" (1968, John Cassavetes). ♦ June 2 at 2: "Cabiria" (1914, Giovanni Pastrone; silent). ♦ June 2 at 6: "Sunday, Too Far Away" (1975, Ken Hamman) and "The Story of the Kelly Gang" (1906, Charles Tait; silent). ♦ June 2 at 6:30, June 3 at 2:45, and June 4 at 6:15: "Chelsea Girls" (1966, Andy Warhol). ♦ June 3 at 2: "Mata Hari" (1931, George Fitzmaurice). ♦ June 3 at 5: "The Spy in Black" (†). ♦ June 4 at 6: "Romancero Marroquí" (1939, Enrique Domínguez Rodiño and Carlos Velo; in Spanish). ♦ June 4 at 8: "Welcome, Mr. Marshall" (1953, Luis García Berlanga; in Spanish).

ncluding "Friday" (2002), are on view in the exhibition "Place and Time," at the Museum of Modern Art through Sept. 3.

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—The films of Samuel Fuller. June 2 at 2: "Underworld, U.S.A." (1960). ♦ June 2 at 4: "Merrill's Marauders" (1962). ♦ June 2 at 6:30 and June 3 at 4: "Shock Corridor" (†). ♦ June 3 at 2: "The Naked Kiss" (1964). ♦ June 3 at 6:30: "The Big Red One" (1980).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—In première. May 30 at 7 and June 2-3 at 5: "Orange Winter" (2007, Andrei Zagdansky.) ♦ In revival. June 1 at 7: "Casque d'Or" (1952, Jacques Becker; in French).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." June 1 at 9:30: "Juliet of the Spirits" (1965, Federico Fellini; in Italian).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"Magnum in Motion," films by Magnum photographers. May 30 at 1 and 6:30: "Beauty Knows No Pain" (1971, Elliott Erwitt) and "Think of England" (1999, Martin Parr). ♦ May 30 at 5: "The Magnum Story I: Decisive Moments" (1989, Patricia Wheatley and Rosemary Bowen-Jones). ♦ May 31 at 1:30 and 6:30: "Behind the Veil" (1969, Eve Arnold) and "Eve and Marilyn" (1987, Bowen-Jones). ♦ May 31 at 4:45: "The Magnum Story II: The Savage Years" (1989, Wheatley and Bowen-Jones). ♦ June 1 at 1 and 6:15: "Robert Capa: In Love and War" (2002, Anne Makepeace). ♦ June 1 at 2:45 and 8:15: "Les Années Déclic" (1985, Raymond Depardon and Roger Ikhlef) and "Le Retour" (1944-45, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Lieutenant Richard Banks). ♦ June 1 at 4:30: "The Magnum Story III: Close to

THE WENDELL BAKER STORY
What is the collective noun for the Wilson brothers? A relaxation of Wilsons? They're all here, clubbing together to create so blatant a throwback to the nineteen-seventies that any viewer not wearing a floral shirt may be refused entry to the screening. Directed by Luke and Andrew Wilson, the movie stars Luke as Wendell Baker, a groundless optimist from Texas, who has an unsteady girlfriend (Eva Mendes), a dog, and not much else. After a spell in jail, he goes to work at a retirement home, where the head nurse (Owen Wilson) is making life hell for some of the crusty customers (Harry Dean Stanton, Seymour Cassel, and Kris Kristofferson) and thus asking for revenge. The film is lazy, loose, inoffensive, shot through with occasional sadness, and all but ruined by an ending of spectacular wrongness. Will Ferrell punctures the mood with a cameo of surprising comic ferocity.—*A.L.* (5/21/07) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

BRAND UPON THE BRAIN!: In wide release. **GEORGIA RULE:** In wide release. **HOLLYWOOD DREAMS:** Cinemas 1, 2, and 3 and Quad Cinema. **PARIS, JE T'AIME:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—In première. May 30-June 1 at 6:30 and 9:15 and June 2-3 at 3:30, 6:30, and 9:15: "Magic Mirror" (2005, Manoel de Oliveira; in Portuguese). ♦ June 1 and June 4-5 at 7 and 9:30 and June 2-3 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Fifth Empire" (2004, Oliveira; in Portuguese).

BROOKLYN FILM FESTIVAL
Cobble Hill Cinema, 265 Court St., Brooklyn (718-388-4306)—Through June 10. For complete program information, visit www.wbff.org. June 2 at 6 and June 9 at 4:30: "Stanley Cuba" (2006, Per Anderson). ♦ June 3 at 4:30 and June 5 at 8:30: "Arranged" (2007, Stefan Schaefer and Diane Crespo). ♦ June 3 at 9:30 and June 7 at 6: "Slippery Slope" (2006, Sarah Schenck).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. May 30-June 7 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Mafioso" (1962, Alberto Lattuada; in Italian). ♦ Documentaries by Werner Herzog, plus films of his choice. June 1 at 1:20, 4, 6:40, and 9:20: "Lessons of Darkness" (1992). ♦ June 1 at 2:25, 5:05, and 7:45: "Fata Morgana" (1970). ♦ June 2 at 2:30, 5, 7:15, and 9:30: "Land of Silence and Darkness" (1971) and "La Soufrière" (1977). ♦ June 3 at 1:30, 5:20, and 9:10: "Spend It All" (1971, Les Blank) and "A Well Spent Life" (1971, Blank). ♦ June 3 at 3:10 and 7: "Burden of Dreams" (1982, Blank) and "Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe" (1979, Blank). ♦ June 4 at 2, 4:20, 6:40, and 9: "The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On" (1987, Kazuo Hara; in Japanese). ♦ June 5 at 2, 5:10, and 9:20: "The Wild Blue Yonder" (2005).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through July 31: The films of René Clair. June 5 at 8: "Entr'acte" (1924; silent), with a performance by the pianist Bruce Levingston.

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. June 1-5 (call for showtimes): "Mala Noche" (1985, Gus Van Sant). ♦ June 5 at 7:30: "Monterey Pop" (1968, D. A. Pennebaker). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." June 1-2: "The Beales of Grey Gardens" (2006, Albert and David Maysles).

the Edge" (1989, Wheatley and Bowen-Jones). ♦ June 2 at 2: "The Magnum Story I, II, and III" (1989, Wheatley and Bowen-Jones). ♦ June 2 at 6 and June 3 at 4:30: "The Train" (2001, Donovan Wylie) and "The Two Faces of China" (1968, René Burri). ♦ June 3 at 8 and June 4 at 2: "Pictures from a Revolution" (1991, Susan Meiselas, Richard P. Rogers, and Alfred Guzzetti).

READINGS AND TALKS

SYMPHONY SPACE
The final installment of this season's "Selected Shorts" series finds Ruth Reichl (the editor-in-chief of *Gourmet*) joining Isaiah Sheffer (Symphony Space's artistic director), the actor Kelli O'Hara, and Calvin Trillin (a writer for this magazine) for an evening of readings focussing on palate-pleasing adventures. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 30 at 6:30.)

THE KITCHEN
The experimental fiction writer Gary Lutz, the Guggenheim fellow Kalup Linzy, the musician Mick Barr, and the art writer Ariana Reines appear in support of *Soft Targets*, a literary journal. The newest issue is dedicated to literature in translation. (512 W. 19th St. May 30 at 7. For more information, visit www.softtargetsjournal.com.)

BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
The society, along with the New-York Historical Society and the Weeksville Heritage Center, brings together Craig S. Wilder and other local historians for a discussion about gentrification, eminent domain, and development titled "Who Owns Brooklyn?" (128 Pierrepont St., at Clinton St. 718-222-4111. May 31 at 6.)

"READINGS ON THE 4TH FLOOR"
The inner tendencies of preschoolers will be exposed during the talk "Making Milk Snort Out of Your Kid's Nose: Experts Explain." A puppeteer (Joey Mazzarino), a children's book author (Jon Scieszka), and the creator of a Cartoon Network show (Tom Warburton) mull the business of entertaining the four-feet-and-under demographic. The author Mo Willems is the moderator. (P.S. 107, Eighth Ave. between 13th and 14th Sts., Park Slope, Brooklyn. 718-330-9340. To purchase tickets, visit www.ps107.org. June 5 at 7:30.)

92ND STREET Y
Ian McEwan offers selections from his new novel, "On Chesil Beach." (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. June 5 at 8.)

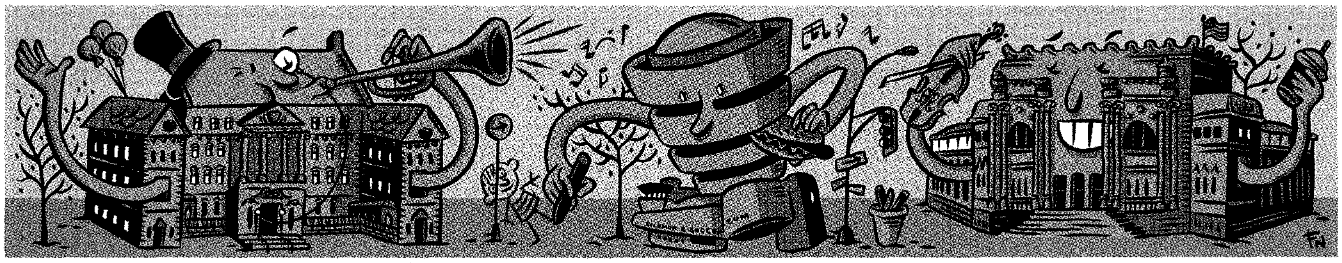
ABOVE AND BEYOND

SPECIAL OLYMPICS
Riverbank State Park is the site of this competition welcoming more than twelve hundred developmentally disabled athletes. They are scheduled to take part in five events: aquatics, track and field, basketball, power lifting, and volleyball. Volunteers are welcome. (679 Riverside Dr., at 145th St. June 2 at 10 A.M. For more information, visit www.specialolympicsny.org.)

"CIRCUSUNDAYS"
Each week in June, a diverse collection of performers gathers at the Waterfront Museum and Showboat Barge, in Red Hook, Brooklyn. The first installment features Ilka, a German juggler, and the Mermaidens, a set of sibling trapeze artists. (June 3 at 1 and 4. For a schedule of weekly performances, visit www.waterfrontmuseum.org.)

RUSSIAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL
A monthlong tribute to all things Russian kicks off in Brooklyn's Asser Levy Park on June 3. The culture and fine arts of the old country are celebrated with Russian food and dance, as well as performances by several children's collectives interested in traditions of their parents' native land. (For more information, call 212-687-6118, ext. 201. Through June 27.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
The two big houses make their semiannual tour through the art of Latin America this week, with a large selection of notable works on offer. At **Christie's** sale (May 31-June 1), the top lot is a canvas from the early forties by Matta, "Tige Verte (les Possessions)," executed in a style that would influence the American Abstract Expressionists; the painting has never before been seen at auction. The sale is preceded by one of film memorabilia (May 30) which features a hot-pink dress worn by Audrey Hepburn in "Breakfast at Tiffany's," as well as more than two dozen lots from the estate of Stan Laurel. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ **Sotheby's** Latin-American sales (May 30-31) feature several paintings long thought to be lost, including a Constructivist composition by Joaquín Torres-García from 1932, and a jazzy modernist canvas by Mario Carreño, "Danza Afro-Cubana" (1943). Sports fans get their day (June 5) in a sale that includes a jersey worn by Lou Gehrig, a bat swung by Babe Ruth, and Wilt Chamberlain's Philadelphia Warriors rookie uniform. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ The downtown auctioneer **Phillips** will hold one of its quarterly "Saturday@Phillips" auctions of moderately priced photographs, design objects, and jewelry (June 2), as well as a selling exhibition devoted to works by the sagelike New York artist Daniel Brush (May 31-June 30). (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.)



The Museum Mile Festival, on Fifth Avenue.

FIDO NESTI

ON THE HORIZON

ART
TO THE STREETS
June 12

Fifth Avenue will be closed to traffic between 82nd and 105th Streets on the evening of June 12 for the twenty-ninth annual Museum Mile Festival. Nine museums that are located along that stretch (including the Met, the Guggenheim, the Neue Galerie, and the Museo del Barrio) will offer free admission, and the streets between them will fill with musicians, clowns, jugglers, chalk-art projects, and more. (www.museummilefestival.org.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
VOICES OF SUMMER
June 12-23

Peter Gelb's "new Met" may prize innovation, but he's not likely to tamper with "Met in the Parks," a beloved summer tradition in New York and New Jersey. This year's schedule of free operas begins with "La Bohème" in Central Park. (212-362-6000.)

THE THEATRE
SUMMER STOCK
June 14-Aug. 26

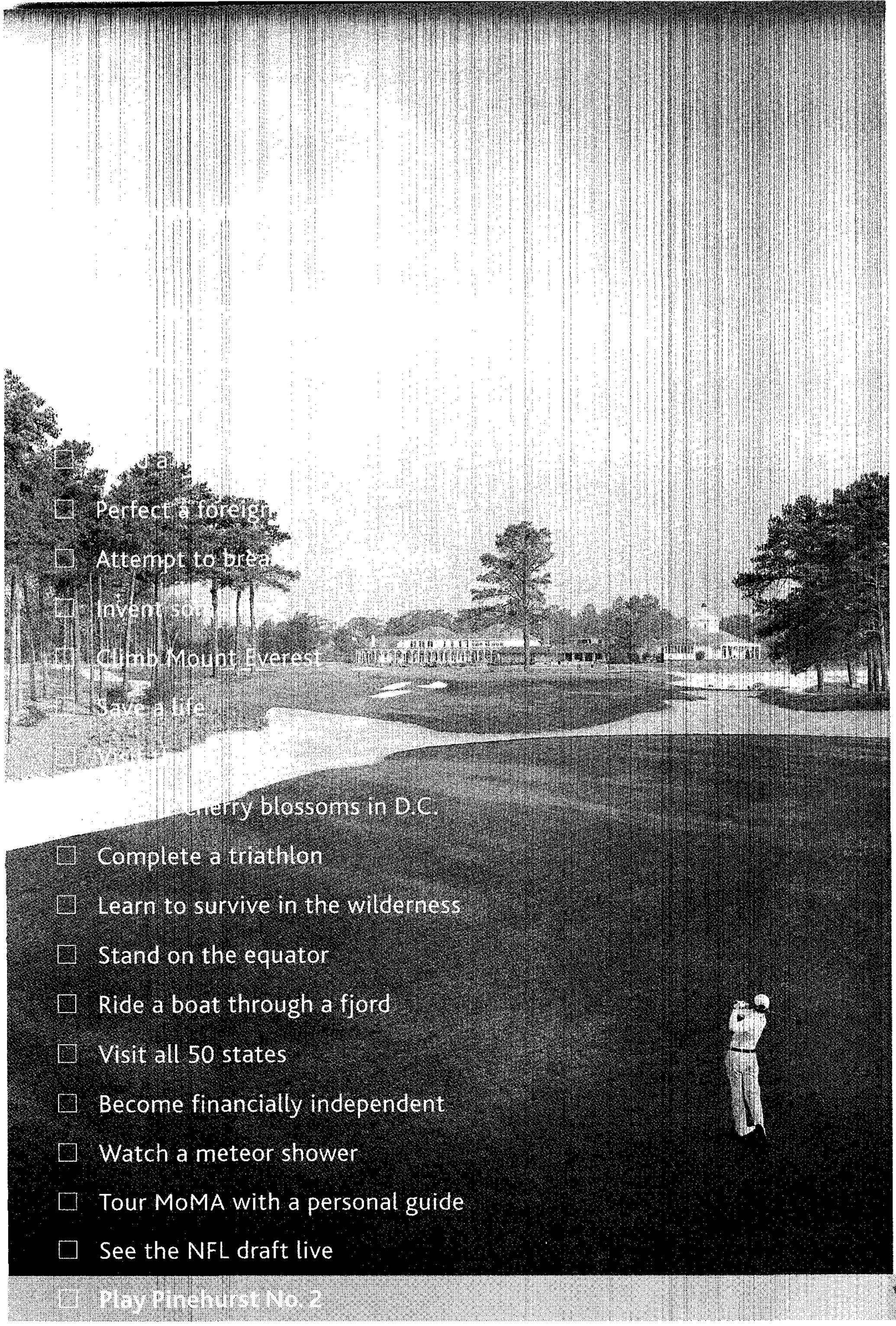
The Williamstown Theatre Festival, in Massachusetts, kicks off its season with "Herringbone," a one-man musical starring B. D. Wong. The festival stages ten plays over the summer, including "The Corn Is Green," starring Kate Burton; "Crimes of the Heart," directed by Kathleen Turner and starring Sarah Paulson and Lily Rabe; and Lillian Hellman's "The Autumn Garden," with Allison Janney, Mamie Gummer, and Elizabeth Franz. (413-597-3400.)

DANCE
CHANCE ENCOUNTER
June 19-Oct. 13

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts presents an exhibition of artifacts from the work of Merce Cunningham and his illustrious collaborators, including scores by John Cage, backdrops and costumes by Robert Rauschenberg, and Mylar pillows by Andy Warhol. (212-870-1630.)

NIGHT LIFE
OFFSHORE
July 28-29

The "Rock the Bells" festival, featuring the Wu-Tang Clan and Rage Against the Machine along with a slew of other acts, comes to Randall's Island. (www.rockthebells.net.)



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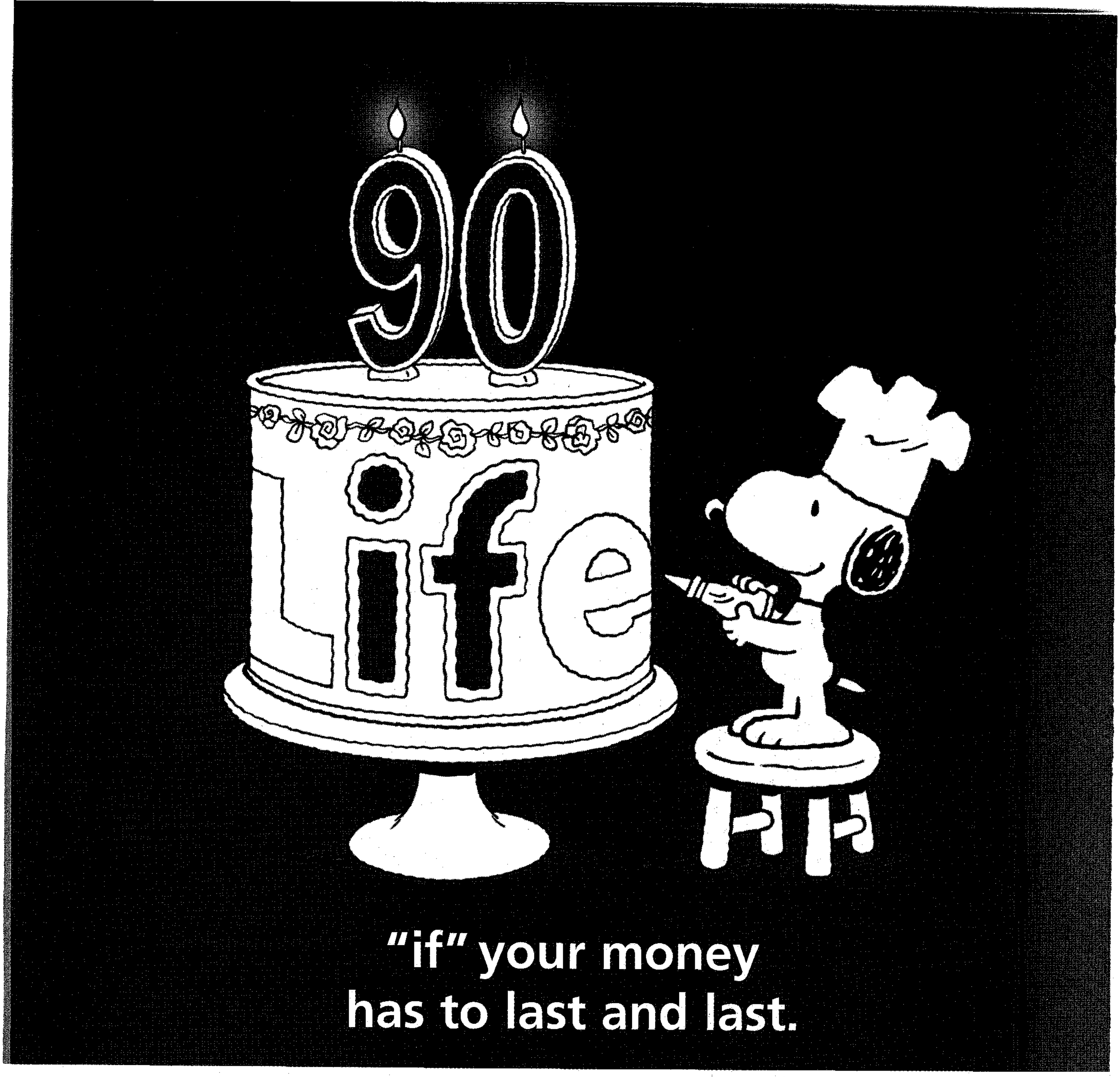

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
FAMILY GUY

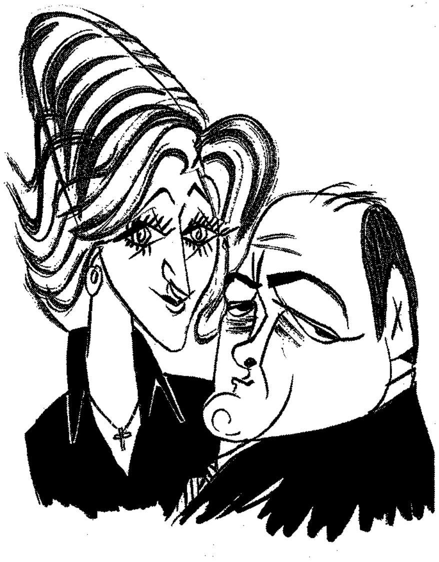
In the pilot episode of "The Sopranos," which Home Box Office first aired on January 10, 1999, a thickening son of Essex County, New Jersey, reluctantly visits Jennifer Melfi, a psychiatrist, at her office in Montclair. His name is Anthony Soprano and he has been depressed.

Tony lives in a "French provincial" McMansion in North Caldwell with his wife, Carmela, and their children, Meadow and A.J. He works as a "waste-management consultant," as he all too modestly informs his doctor; in fact, his interests extend to the docks, "no show" construction jobs, paving and joint-fitting unions, an "executive card game," a sports book in Roseville, loan-sharking, coffee-shop and pizza-place protection rackets, truck hijacking, HUD scams, fell-off-the-back-of-a-truck consumer goods, a strip club in Lodi, and extensive holdings in real estate, vinegar peppers, and *gabagool.*

Tony Soprano, as everyone in north Jersey and beyond has come to know, is the head of the Di Meo crime family. He has been suffering from panic attacks. Business is uneven. His associates and his children lack focus. His uncle resents his authority. His wife resents his late-night romps with yet another *goomah.* And his mother, the Medea of Bloomfield Avenue, never loved him (and may yet give the signal to have him whacked). The pressure is really something. Just recently, he tells Dr. Melfi, he was short of breath, *tingly inside*—"It felt like ginger ale in my skull." He collapsed while grilling pork sausages on the barbecue:

> TONY: The morning of the day I got sick, I been thinking. It's good to be in something from the ground floor. I came in too late for that, I know. But lately, I'm getting the feeling that I came in at the end. The best is over.
>
> DR. MELFI: Many Americans, I think, feel that way.
>
> TONY: I think about my father. He never reached the heights like me. But in a lotta ways he had it better. He had his people. They had their standards. They had pride. Today, whadda we got?

And so began Tony's quest for a renewed sense of family, heritage, coherent truths, mental health, and a prime cut of the Esplanade construction projects. "The Sopranos," the richest achievement in the history of television, comes to an end June 10th, after eighty-six episodes. It has been with us a long time—longer than the Bush Administration (and nothing seems more interminable than that).

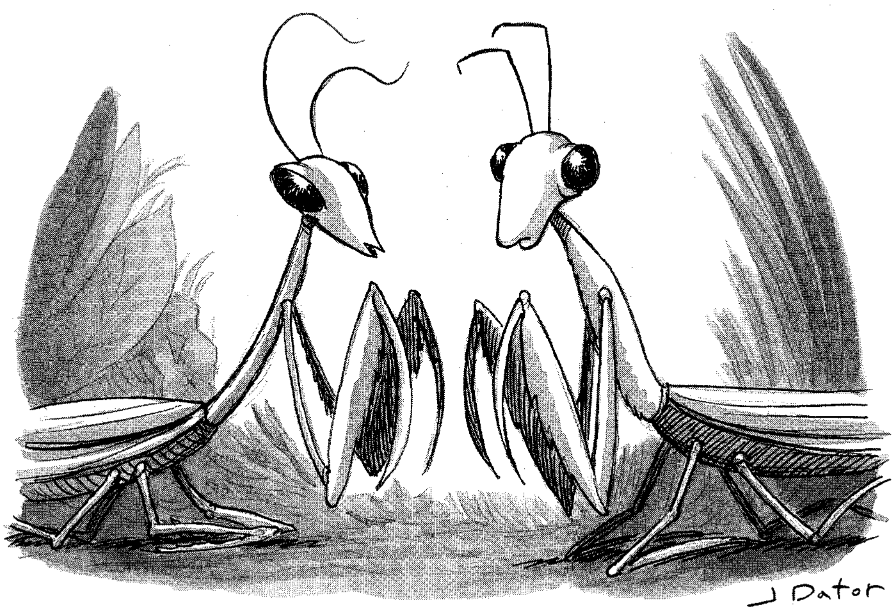


In his first hour onscreen, Tony, played by James Gandolfini, still had a modest shock of hair and a Gleason-esque lightness to his step. He had not yet achieved the menacing rhino plod that would come with time, anxiety, and fifteen thousand buttered bialys. We'd yet to glimpse his rages, and his accent was less mobbed up, almost refined. He sounded more Summit than Newark.

Nevertheless, to an astonishing degree the characters and the ideas—comic, dramatic, and social—in "The Sopranos" were in place from the start. Even though its creator, David Chase, never had the luxury of a novelist's control of length and narrative destiny, he has rarely faltered. The show evolved in the manner of a sprawling social novel of the nineteenth century, constantly sprouting new plotlines, developing recurring jokes, images, and characters. Dickens would have seen a kinsman in the creator of "Paulie Walnuts" Gualtieri. Besides, there are fewer dull patches in "The Sopranos" than there are in "The Mystery of Edwin Drood"—all due respect.

Like John Updike's Rabbit series or Philip Roth's novels of the past decade, "The Sopranos" teems with the mindless commerce and consumption of modern

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



"After we have sex but before I kill you, I'm going to need your help with some shelves."

• •

America. The drama and the comedy are rooted in the particulars of life as it is lived from the Pulaski Skyway to Bergen Avenue, and yet the larger events of the world are never completely sealed from view. There are always televisions playing in the background—the local news in offices and hospital rooms, the "Hitler channel" in Tony's living room—and so world politics is the undercurrent rumbling beneath the ordinary nights in New Jersey. History echoes the domestic catastrophes. As Bobby "Bacala" Baccalieri put it with dire resignation, "Quasimodo predicted all of this."

No matter how funny or blatantly cartoonish some of the supporting players are (Steve Van Zandt's Silvio Dante seems less like a human being than an animated Fellini figure), the mobsters and their families in "The Sopranos" are a recognizable reflection of all of us. The epic is peopled with every variety of twenty-first-century character imaginable: mobsters, yes, but also shadow communities of smug and equally troubled psychiatrists, disillusioned F.B.I. agents and cops, neurotic priests, immigrant "caregivers," screen-addled teen-agers, earnestly self-indulgent Columbia students. It is an Essex County of Italians, Irish, blacks, and Jews, but also of new immigrants: Koreans, Russians, Ukrainians, and Arabs. Other television series have guests, character types who make a purposeful one-night stand and are then replaced with new types in new situations. In "The Sopranos," characters arrive and take full human shape; children grow into adults—and sometimes, without explanation, like a Russian mobster fleeing through the snowy woods of the Pine Barrens, they inexplicably disappear and frustrate our TV-shaped need for lessons and resolution. It doesn't matter that we come to "like" Adriana La Cerva. Chase has no use for our sentiment. He kills it off with a .38.

"The Sopranos," like its predecessor, Martin Scorsese's "Goodfellas," is about the ruthlessness of petty lying crooks, but the beat-downs, strangulations, and shootings are the least of the violence. Chase is merciless with his exposure of the ordinary disappointments and tragedies. He has immersed us for years in an examination of addiction, twelve-step recoveries, teen-age depression, modern pharmacology, suicides, sexual indulgence, family betrayals, financial manipulation, accidents, heart attacks, strokes, death and dying—and always, afterward, the inability to summon a language to equal the emotion. "Whaddya gonna do?" is the shrugging motif. A young, healthy thug dies reading a magazine on the toilet. An S.U.V. flips over on a rain-slick road. "Whaddya gonna do?"

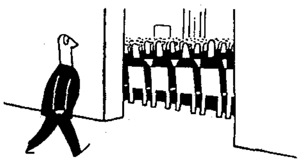
Michael Corleone almost convinces us, in his autumnal walk with Kay Adams, that he is the moral superior of a senator. Chase's vision is darker, and as we descend into the death spiral of the final episodes it only gets worse. Just when we begin to grow too fond of Tony, when we get all gooey about his plight as a misunderstood son and overextended executive and father, Chase has him do something to undercut our sympathy. After his son, A.J., has tried to kill himself by pulling a plastic bag over his head, tying a cinder block to his foot, and jumping into the family's back-yard swimming pool, Tony explains to Dr. Melfi (Lorraine Bracco) that A.J. survived because the rope was too long. Maybe he's just "an idiot," he declares offhandedly, his paternal grief mixing with loveless dismissal. "Historically, that's been the case." Even Tony's clear-eyed and maternal wife, Carmela, played by Edie Falco, is willing to set aside her occasional outbursts of umbrage for the price of an Hermès scarf. "They say it's the best," Tony informs her, as the marital storm passes.

Everyone in "The Sopranos" has grown older (and we along with them). One after another, the made men and crew members disappear from the stage—an accelerated version of what happens naturally. "Hope comes in many forms," Dr. Melfi tells Tony in one of their first sessions. "Well, who's got the time for that?" he replies.

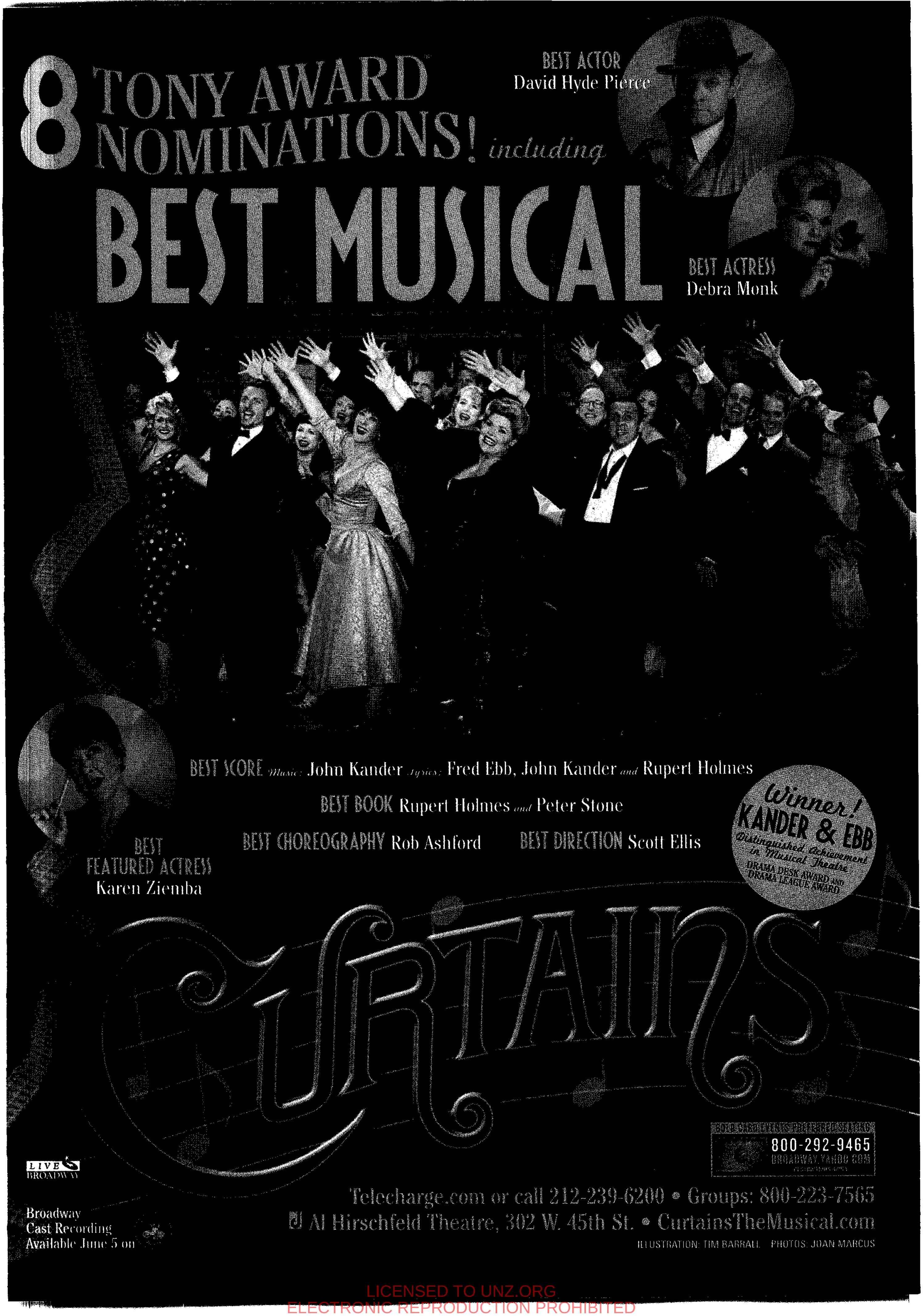
The end is a mystery, but we know one thing: "The Sopranos" defied Aristotelian conventions. It is a comedy that ends with a litany of the dead and missing. Whaddya gonna do?

—*David Remnick*

DEPT. OF BELATED THANKS
A THOUSAND WORDS



Sig Gissler, the administrator of the Pulitzer Prizes, keeps four prize-winning photographs on the wall above his desk. One is of Babe Ruth's farewell, at Yankee Stadium; another shows Presidents Kennedy and Eisenhower walking



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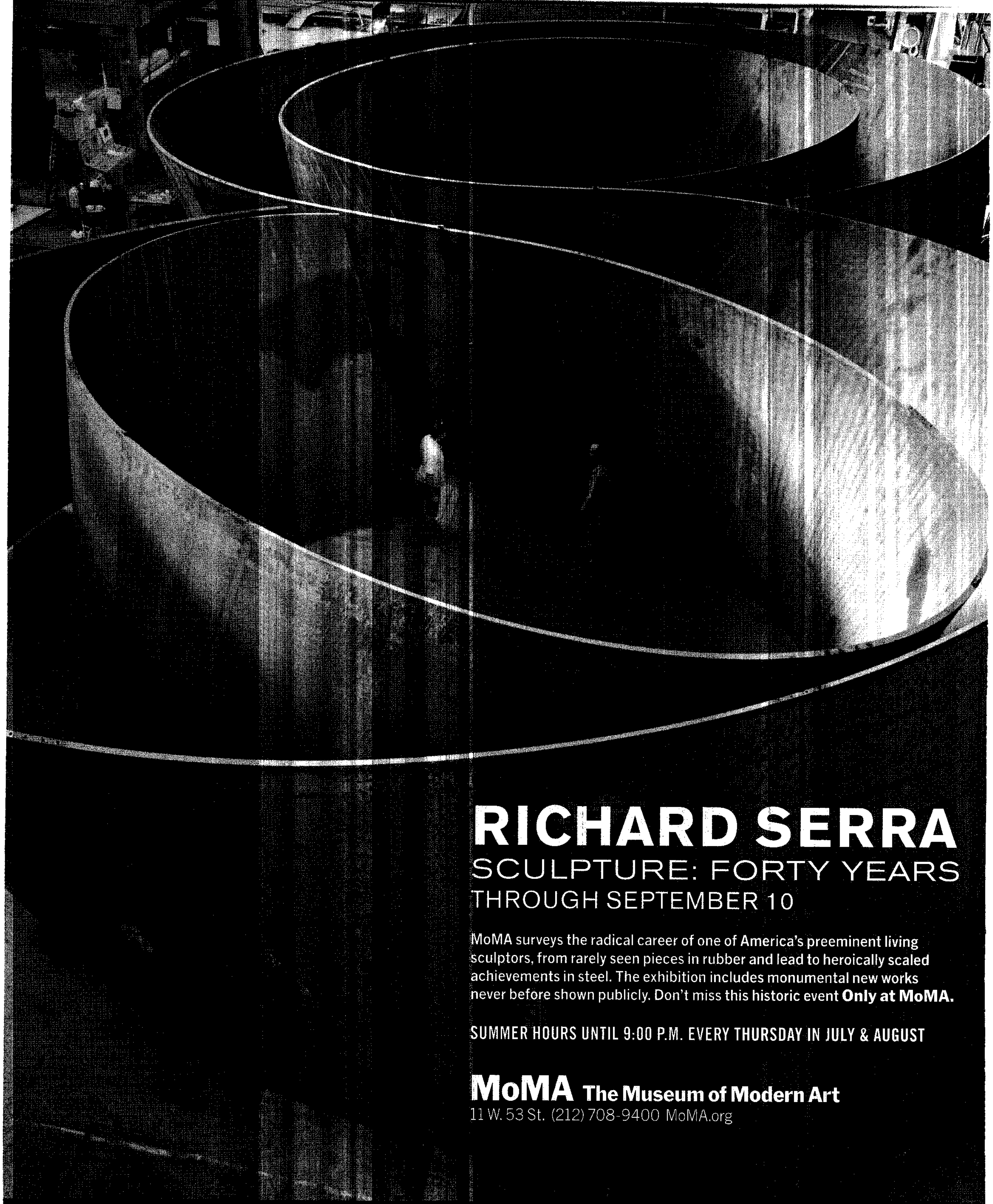

RICHARD SERRA

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Richard Serra. Sequence (detail). 2006. Weatherproof steel. Collection of the artist. Photo: Lorenz Kienzle. © 2007 Richard Serra / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

together at Camp David; a third depicts the raising of the American flag at Iwo Jima; and the last, taken in 1979, shows the execution of eleven men by a firing squad, at close range—an iconic distillation of the legacy of Ayatollah Khomeini. "It haunted me as I sat there at my desk day after day," Gissler said recently of the image. For twenty-seven years, the photographer's identity was unknown; the Iranian newspaper *Ettela'at*, when it published the image, withheld attribution out of concern for his safety. The shot remains the only anonymous recipient of a Pulitzer in the ninety-year history of the prizes.

The photographer's name, we now know, is Jahangir Razmi. His identity was uncovered last December, with his permission, by a *Wall Street Journal* reporter, Joshua Prager, and the Pulitzer board decided to credit Razmi formally at its awards ceremony, last week, with a ten-thousand-dollar prize. For the occasion, Razmi, who is fifty-nine, and his wife, Parvin, made their first trip to the United States. After landing at J.F.K., they visited the United Nations and the Brooklyn Bridge, window-shopped on Fifth Avenue, and stopped at the Chase branch on Broadway at 109th Street to cash their winnings, posing for pictures with the chief teller. (The United States and Iran do *not* share banking relations, so cashing the check in Tehran might have been complicated.) After a while, Parvin asked, "Where's all the fruit in this country?" They added Fairway to their itinerary.

On the eve of the Pulitzer ceremony, Prager organized a dinner party in the Razmis' honor, at the penthouse apartment of a friend, the philanthropist Greg Carr. There Razmi met Monir Nahid, a Kurdish woman whose two sons were among the eleven victims Razmi documented, and who in the aftermath of the shootings had used the photograph to rally for an independent Kurdistan, before escaping to Germany, in the fall of 1979. (She now lives in Los Angeles.) Razmi and Nahid embraced and, talking through tears, expressed relief at having finally had a chance to meet. "We never hide behind clouds," Razmi said, in Farsi. "In the end, all will be revealed."

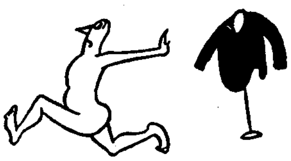
Soon afterward, Sharok Hatami, whom Prager calls "the forefather of Iranian photojournalism," arrived. Hatami lives in New York and has not been to Iran since 1983. He was dressed in cargo pants, sandals, and a baseball cap, and seemed to embody the road not taken for Razmi, who opened a studio in Tehran after tiring of newspaper work. (Razmi has photographed every Iranian President except Ahmadinejad.) Hatami introduced himself as a close personal friend of Coco Chanel and Sharon Tate. "You can Google me," he said. (The first listing is from CharlieManson.com: "Sharok Hatami was the photographer at Sharon's house when Manson dropped by a few months before the murders.") He picked up a glass of kosher Chardonnay. "I'm finishing my first wine and looking forward to my second," he said, and wandered off with his camera to snap pictures of the Flatiron Building.

Over dinner, Prager pointed out that Razmi had lost the hearing in his right ear from a mortar explosion. Razmi gave the date of his injury using the Iranian calendar, and Maryam Rassapour, a former neighbor in Tehran who had taken the bus up that morning from Washington, converted it for the benefit of the Western guests: 1987, during the Iran-Iraq War. For dessert, a rice-berry-and-mango pudding was served, and Rassapour expressed surprise. "We serve it with hot chicken in Iran," she said. "It's one of my favorite foods. All of a sudden it comes with mango?"

Original compositions by Razmi's son Ali, a professional player of the *tar*, a type of Iranian lute, were piped in as coffee was served. At last, Razmi rose to speak. "I'm now returning to a country in which bad things are happening, and I hope I can act as a responsible journalist in bringing truth to the people," he said, through an interpreter. "The prize that I'm getting tomorrow is for being patient and for waiting such a long time."

—*Ben McGrath*

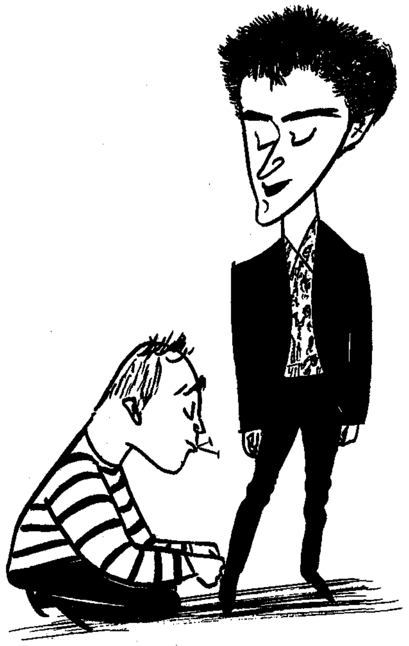
RAG TRADE
PRAMA



Not long ago, Steven Cox, one half of the eccentric menswear label Duckie Brown, was checking the e-mail account he shares with his partner, Daniel Silver. He came across a message titled "A Not So Ridiculous Proposition":

> My name is Robert William Asch. I am a senior in high school with a love for rock and roll, girls, and your collections. . . . Here is my spiel: how lovely . . . would it be to dress a teen in Duckie Brown for Prom? . . . At some ridiculously mediocre hotel in North Jersey? . . . Or am I crazy?

"Steven was like, 'I think there's something special about this kid,' " Silver recalled the other day. The designers slept on it and then wrote back: "Dear Robert, No you are not crazy!!!" They asked for his measurements ("six feet with an indie boy frame"; 38 jacket, 31 x 32 pants) and more details about the prom (first week of June; Ridgewood High School; music by D.J. Krazy Kat at the Marriott at Glenpointe, followed by house parties on the Jersey Shore). They had some reservations—"We were thinking, Oh my God, this is a trap," Cox said. "The guy's going to come here, and he's sixteen, and there's going to be some sexual-harassment thing"—so they asked to speak to his parents. "We talked to the father, a bond trader, and he was cool," Cox said. "So why not?"



Prom fitting

On a recent afternoon, the designers were waiting in their West Village studio, which is also their living room, bedroom, production room, and kitchen. Racks of clothes lined the walls, and in the center of the room there was an "inspiration table" piled with postcards, gold buttons, and a china pineapple.

"You didn't have any friends in high school, did you, Daniel?" Cox asked.

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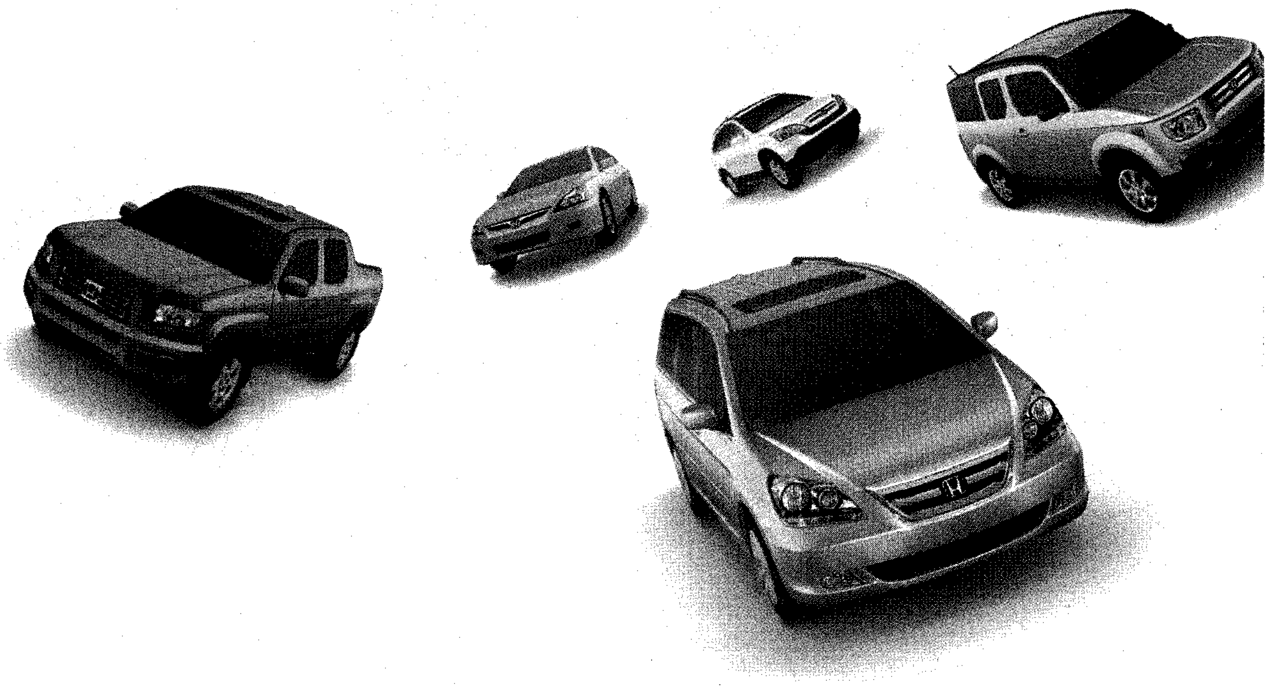

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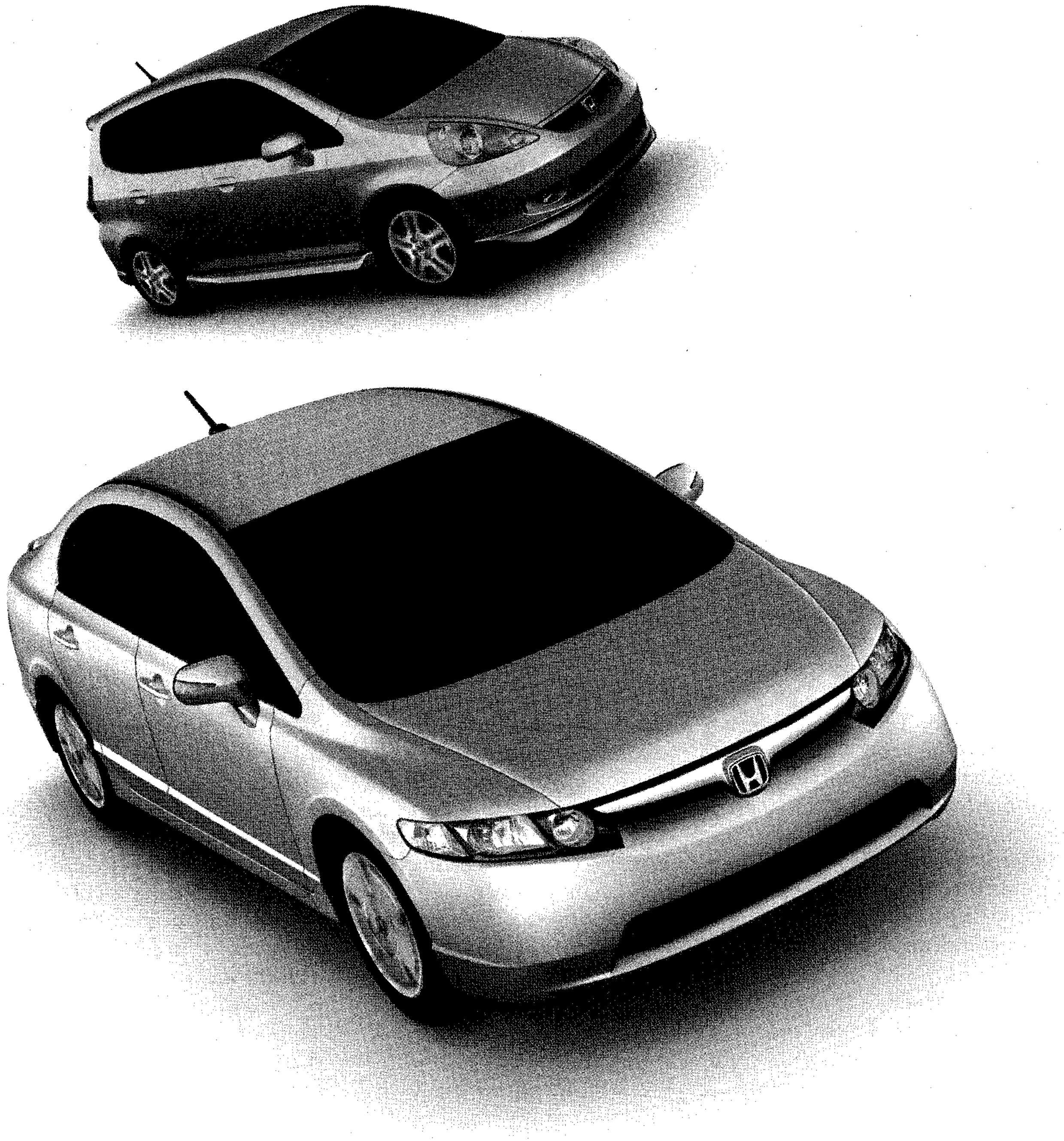

HONDA
The Power of Dreams

"Don't be mean," Silver said.

The doorbell rang. It was Robert Asch: skinny, with buzzed hair, loose jeans, and an iPod attached to enormous headphones. "I'm Robert," he said, sticking out his hand.

"I'm Steven," Cox said. "How do you want to look for your prom?"

"It's definitely a formal-wear type thing," Asch said.

"So you want to look sort of dolled up," Silver said.

"Yeah," Asch said. "Sharp."

This eliminated some of the flashier possibilities: a silver jacket, made of a polyester-silk fabric hand-loomed in France; a pair of yellow trousers covered in a fluorescent paisley pattern. "This is a fashion piece," Cox said, taking out a short chocolate-brown jacket that evoked a bellhop. Nope. Silver brandished a black cotton jacket that had faint navy-blue pinstripes. Asch slipped it on; the sleeves fell just over his wrists.

"This is a beautiful jacket," Cox said. "It's hand-tailored Duckie Brown, super expensive—about three thousand dollars. How do you feel in that?"

"I'm totally comfortable," Asch said. He put on a pair of narrow black flat-front trousers. Cox knelt and started to pin the hem.

"Now, I don't know what a prom is, because I've never been to one," said Cox, who is from England. "But why do you go to a motel afterward? Is it, like, a sex thing?"

"You go and get drunk," suggested Silver, who is from Canada.

"Yeah," Asch said. "You go to prom on a Friday night, and the rest of the weekend is spent, you know, partying."

"How much is the ticket?" Silver asked.

"A little over a hundred."

"Do kids hire those big white—what do you call them?" Silver asked. "Those limousines that look like monster trucks?"

"Hummers," Cox said.

"There may be a few of those," Asch said. "*I* won't be in a Hummer."

Silver said, "Hanging out of the sunroof! Woo-hoo!"

Later, Asch explained his interest in fashion: "I got into it probably from my ex-girlfriend. She was kind of a *Cosmo* girl. She was a senior then, and the whole prom-dress search got me into fashion. We looked for a long time. We went to Paramus, the Garden State Plaza. It's a big mall. We went all over the place. She was kind of a girly girl, and, being an actor, I'm kind of a girly guy." His prom date this year is his best friend, Lauren, who will be wearing a flapper-style dress and an orchid corsage. "She's caught up in her own 'prama,' as they call it," Asch said. "Drama during prom season is called 'prama.' "

"Do you have any shoes?" Cox asked. They found him a pair of black Florsheims with a seventies feel. For the shirt, he selected a white button-down covered in a spidery, hand-drawn pattern. In all, the outfit was worth thirty-eight hundred dollars, but the designers made it a prom gift.

"There's almost a toreador feel to it," Cox said as Asch modelled by the doorway. He thought a moment and added, "It's like, 'Bye, son! Go out into the world! Be successful!' "

"Find love!" Silver said. "Make money!"

Asch moved his arms around: "I feel fantastic."

—*Lizzie Widdicombe*

STICKS AND STONES DEPT.
YOUR NAME HERE

In 2001, Barnaby Harris, as he put it recently, "got married to a beautiful woman who was extremely passionate about her yoga practice." Not long after, he decided to have a special T-shirt made for her birthday. It was white with blue lettering: "Fuck Yoga." The marriage didn't last, but the sentiment did: Harris, a former Broadway stage manager, is now a full-time purveyor of "Fuck" paraphernalia. Despite the popularity of the anti-yoga slogan, Harris struggled to produce a follow-up hit. The only other suitable direct object he has come up with is "Frank Gehry." "It has a lyrical quality," Harris said.

Inspiration for the second saying struck several years ago, Harris said, "when, with all the press for Bilbao, the Disney Concert Hall, a tolerance center in Jerusalem, it was like Frank had just put his foot down on top of us and crushed us. He had Brad Pitt making his coffee. You win, Frank." (Urban myth has it that Pitt, who is an acquaintance of Gehry, worked with him as an apprentice.) Harris had the "Fuck Frank Gehry" shirts made in brown with orange lettering and in navy blue with silver lettering. He sold a few hundred, many to Europeans. Opponents of Bruce Ratner's Atlantic Yards development, in Brooklyn, kept asking for donations.

Then, in March, a friend of Harris's named Howell Caldwell was working as an assistant director on a weight-loss commercial starring Valerie Bertinelli. Get this: Caldwell's limo driver, Geoffrey Cushing-Murray, also drives Gehry; on set, he mentioned to a friend that he had run into her husband wearing a "Fuck Frank Gehry" shirt at a Super Bowl party. Cushing-Murray had told Gehry about the encounter, and Gehry, he said, had been intrigued. Caldwell volunteered that he knew the guy who made the shirts. Within days, a sample batch was on its way to Gehry's office.

"Somebody sent it to me," Gehry said the other day, over the telephone, "and I thought it must have been the people in Brooklyn who are sort of angry. But then I thought, well, it must be loving, too. So I decided it was funny, and I put it on. And I wore it to the office, and everybody got a kick out of that, and then I wore it to the gym"—Gehry lifts weights at a Gold's in Venice Beach—"and everybody got a kick out of that. The tough gals at the gym said, 'If it's an offer, you better be able to deliver, Mr. Gehry.' " Gehry's wife, Berta, found this all funny. ("She's Panamanian, so she doesn't get rattled by much," Gehry said.) In a Queer Nationesque move of appropriation, Gehry decided to begin sending the shirts out as gifts.

"First, someone from his office called and wanted me to deliver one to a friend of Frank's who was giving a lecture at Baruch College called 'Starchitecture,' " Harris recalled. "A week later, he called again: 'Would you please send some shirts to Bruce Ratner?' A couple of weeks ago, I got a third call: 'Frank needs two in every color and every size.' "

It was suggested to Gehry, who once had a cameo on "The Simpsons," that for a high-powered architect he had an unusual ability to take a joke. "Yeah," he said,

The author of *Norwegian Wood* and
The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle

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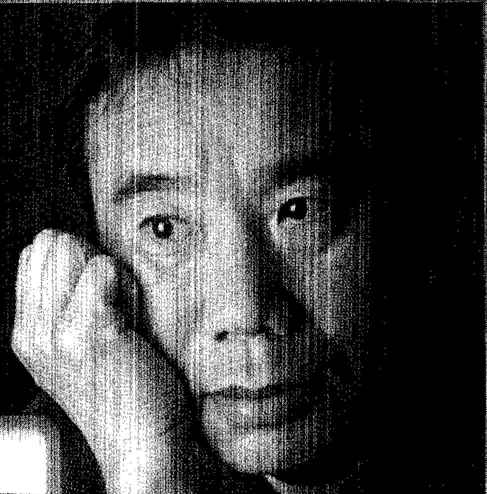

after
DARK
a Novel
HARUKI
MURAKAMI

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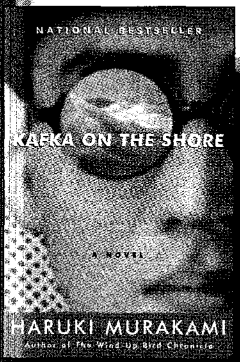
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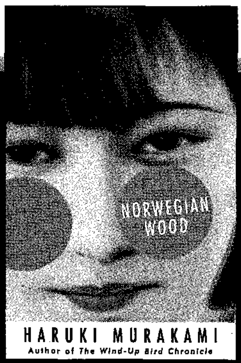
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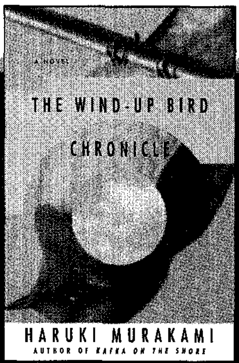
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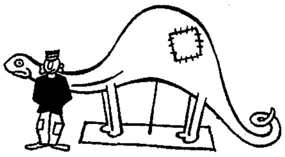
READ EXCERPTS, FIND MUSIC PLAYLISTS, JOIN THE COMMUNITY AT WWW.HARUKIMURAKAMI.COM "because as I've gotten to be pretty well known there's a lot of negative stuff written, right? People potshot at you. So I sort of ignore it. You know, when Bilbao was presented publicly, there was a candlelight vigil against me." He let out a rueful laugh. "And then there was a thing in a Spanish paper saying, 'Kill the American Architect.' That was scary. So I stood beside the President every time there was an event. I figured, if they're gonna kill me . . . Anyway. Once the building was built, I could live there for free. And the same thing with Disney Hall—when it was first shown they called it broken crockery, and now everybody thinks it's great. So it takes a while. The little building on the West Side Highway, in New York? A few months ago, everybody was telling me how horrible it is, and now they like it." He laughed again and went on, "You kind of say, 'At least they're looking!' It's not that big a deal, is it, compared to what's going on in the world?"

—*Lauren Collins*

AT THE MUSEUMS
CREATURE FEATURE



The American Museum of Natural History is putting on a big new show of creatures that don't actually exist, "Mythic Creatures: Dragons, Unicorns, and Mermaids," and two first graders, expert in all things imagined, went to see it last week. The scientific spirit of comparison burning bright in them, Lacy and Lily, as they shall be called, had spent the earlier part of the day at the Bronx Zoo, checking out actual animals, before repairing to the museum.

"These things we're going to see don't, like, actually exist, right?" Lacy said. "So they should call it, for now, the Museum of Unnatural History."

"Or, like, maybe, the Museum of Natural Unhistory," Lily remarked.

Upstairs, Laurel Kendall, a curator, greeted them and explained that some of the creatures in the exhibition were real; some were projections from real beasts, "like shadows"; some were hazy reconstructions of real creatures; and some were just completely imaginary beings people make up to scare or impress other people. Then she urged the girls to lead the way into the exhibition, and, just a touch reluctantly, they did.

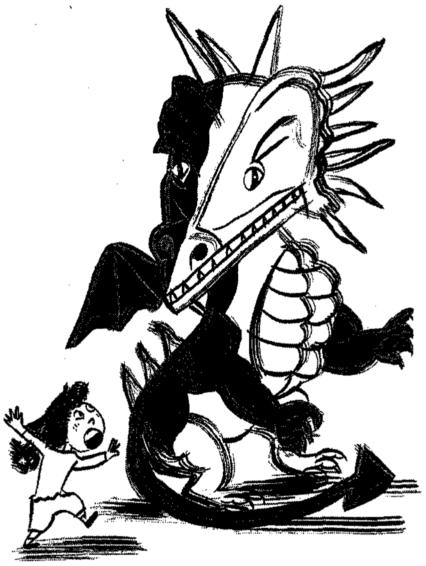
This produced a gratifying (to Dr. Kendall) response of startled cries, halfway to squeals, for, looking right at the girls, snout pressed to retroussé noses, was a nearly twenty-foot-long gold-and-green dragon, with great bony bat wings and fearsome T. rex-style jaws. The decision to let the dragon be the greeter to the exhibition, Dr. Kendall explained, after the girls had calmed down, was partly theatrical and partly intellectual: the dragon is one of the few mythical creatures that bridge the gap between East and West.

"Are all dragons fire-breathing?" Lily asked. "I mean, *if* they, like, existed, would they all breathe fire?" Dr. Kendall said that only Western Eurocentric dragons are said to breathe fire, because for us (with our fear of the Other) they are representations of wickedness, or "fallen angels." The true Chinese dragon isn't a fire-breather, she said, but a damp, benevolent presence who makes the crops grow and keeps order in the universe.

"Could it, like, be a dinosaur they saw?" someone asked, peering at the dragon. Dr. Kendall explained, kindly, that dinosaurs and people were never on the earth together, but that some scientists believe that fossil remains of antediluvian creatures might have contributed to the mythology of the dragon. The girls decided that was cool, and backed away. They looked glad to get away from the dragon.

The next bend in the exhibition led them to a section on mermaids. (The show is cunningly designed around environments: mythical creatures of land, water, and air, the dragon encompassing all three.) The mermaid, Dr. Kendall explained, is probably a bit of a shadow and a bit of a story: although sailors sometimes mistook manatees for mermaids, they also may represent "sailors' fears of women in foreign ports." The girls looked blankly past this explanation, but they were intrigued by one of the small prizes of the show: a nineteenth-century composite skeleton—a monkey skull attached to the tail of a fish—of a kind called a Feejee Mermaid, which may conceivably be the very same one that P. T. Barnum showed at his museum here, back in the nineteenth century. "It looks mean," Lacy said.

A vast reconstruction of the tentacles of the kraken (the giant sea serpent familiar to "Pirates of the Caribbean" lovers) preceded a row of serious-looking vitrines devoted to the history of more minute creatures, including the *kappa*, a Japanese freshwater gremlin who pulls children to their doom, but who can be defeated by a well-timed bow; courteous to the end, the *kappa* will always bow back, spilling a little bowl of empowering water that sits on top of its head and forcing its retreat. Lacy and Lily were particularly impressed by the exhibit that lets you rearrange a fossilized mammoth's bones to make a mythological Titan (a mistake that may have been made by ancient mythologizers) and by the model of the *Gigantopithecus*, an extinct primate that looks exactly like everybody's description of the Yeti—leading some to wonder if a few of them didn't stow themselves away some hundred thousand years ago in the Himalayas.



At the end, the girls created their own dragons on the museum's computers—the software has graphics designed by local tattoo artists—and exited into the gift shop, where they bought stuffed unicorns and a candy called Dragon Juice, which they collectively denounced as gross. Asked to comment on the exhibit, Lily said that, on a scale of one to ten, one being a boring display of woollen socks and ten being a day at Dylan's Candy Bar, she would give the show a ten. "A mythical ten," she added slyly.

—*Adam Gopnik*

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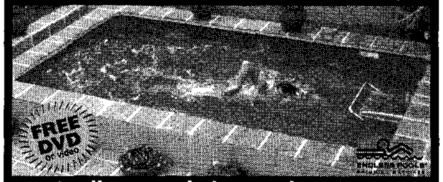

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

PARTY UNFAITHFUL

The Republican implosion.

BY JEFFREY GOLDBERG

The West Wing of the White House tends to have a funereal stillness, even in the best of times, which these are not. The President's aides walk the narrow corridors with pensive expressions and vigilantly modulated voices. By contrast, Karl Rove's office has an almost party atmosphere. Rove, the President's chief political adviser—the "architect," Bush has called him, of his 2004 victory over John Kerry—has been a man of constant troubles: Valerie Plame troubles, U.S. Attorney-firing troubles, and, most of all, collapse-of-the-Republican Party troubles. Yet his voice is suffused with bonhomie, his jokes are bad and frequent, his enthusiasm is communicable; he resembles an oversized leprechaun, although one with unconcealed resentments and a receding hairline.

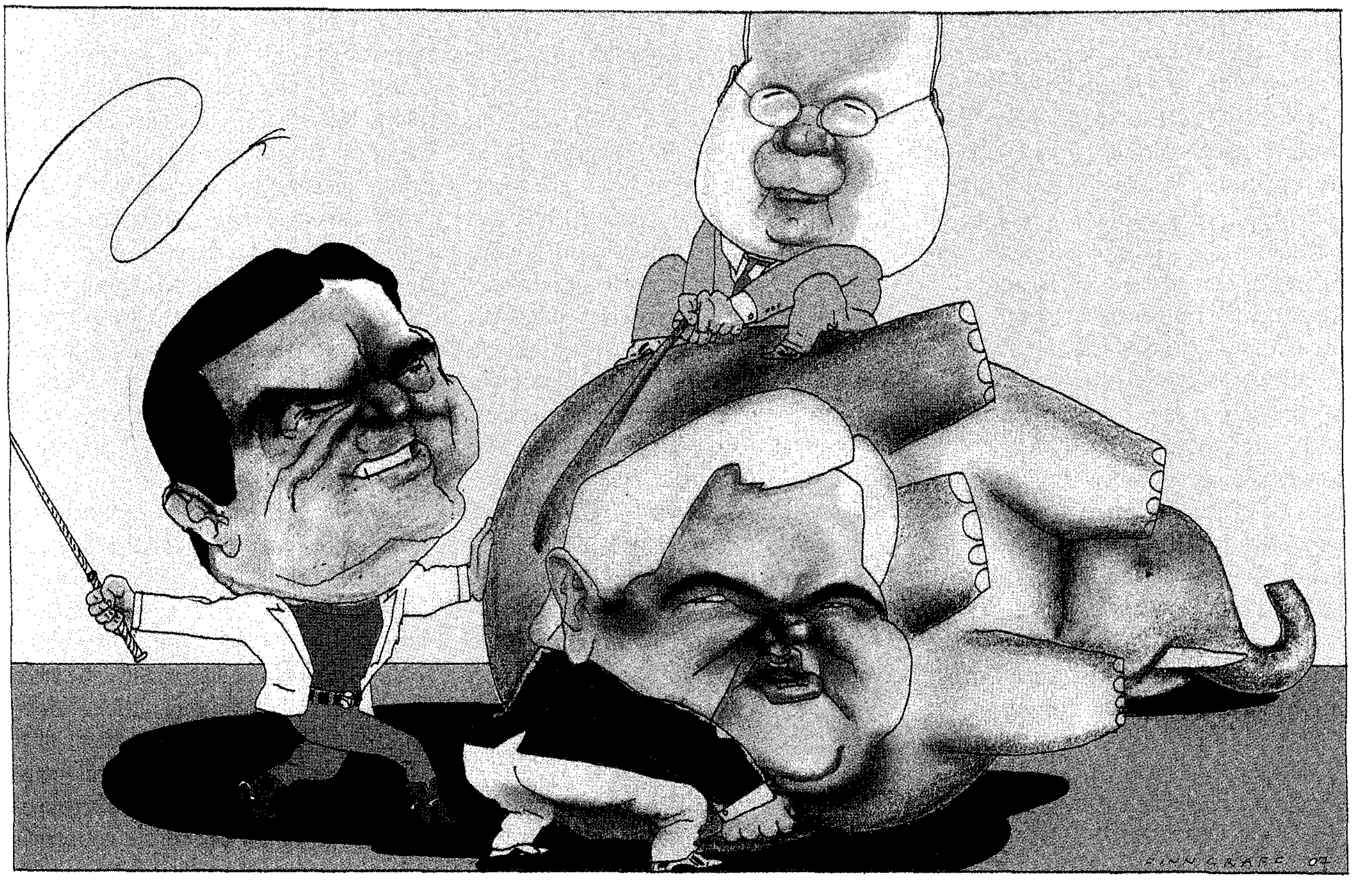
"Hey, what's Snow doing here?" Rove said one recent afternoon. "Must be important, if he's visiting *us*." Tony Snow, the White House press secretary, stood in Rove's outer office, bent over in conversation with one of several assistants. "Uh-oh, here's the big gun," Rove said as Peter Wehner, the White House director of strategic initiatives, came into the office. Wehner, an evangelical Christian, is known in Washington for a relentless stream of e-mails that praise George W. Bush's allies ("The Remarkable Anthony Charles Lynton Blair," "The Remarkable Joseph Lieberman"); that glean from the Internet any cheerful news from Iraq; and that provide links to articles by writers like the Middle East scholar Fouad Ajami and the untiring neoconservative Norman Podhoretz.

As we talked, Rove would bounce up from his chair, twice making a show of going to the dictionary to look up words. (One was "sanguinity," as in "I'm very sanguine" about the Republican Party's future.) He is a bookish man who plays the part of the anti-intellectual, which fits an Administration whose culture discourages displays of esoteric knowledge and, its critics say, of useful knowledge as well.

When Rove came to Washington, after the 2000 election, he envisioned creating an enduring Republican majority—the permanent mobilization of the Party's broad, socially conservative base. Part of his strategy was to cast as threats, in alarming terms, same-sex marriage, abortion rights, and other bogeymen of the right. It is Rove's cleverness, combined with his *joie de combat*, that made him insufferable to Democrats.

Now, though, the Democrats are gloating—and happy to point out that little more than thirty per cent of the public approves of Bush's job performance. Andrew Sullivan, a disaffected conservative, has joked on his blog that Rove seems to be getting his permanent majority—except that it's a Democratic one. The Republican reversal has certainly come with great speed—as fortunes in Washington have tended to do since the Vietnam era. In the midterm election, Republicans lost control of Congress, and the House G.O.P. caucus is beleaguered by scandals and by accusations that its members have benefitted from crude pork-barrel politics. The tenets of neoconservatism that have animated Bush's foreign policy—that America has a responsibility to spread the ideals of democracy, and that force can justifiably be used to aid this secular missionary work—are held in low esteem. The call to change the world which infused Bush's second Inaugural speech has faded.

Disillusionment with the Administration has become widespread among the conservatives who once were Bush's strongest supporters. Mickey Edwards, a former Republican congressman from Oklahoma, said recently, "The Republican Administration has shown itself to be completely incompetent to the point that, of Republicans in Iowa, fifty-two per cent thought we should be out of Iraq in six months." Edwards, who left Congress in 1993 and now teaches at Princeton, is helping to lead an effort among some conservatives to curtail the President's power in such areas as warrantless wiretapping. "This Administration is beyond the pale in terms of arrogance and incompetence," he said. "This guy thinks he's a monarch, and that's scary as hell." The grievances against the Administration seem limitless. Many congressional Republicans, for instance, were upset that Bush waited to fire Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld until after the midterm elections.



Tom DeLay, Newt Gingrich, Karl Rove—who's most to blame for the Republican Party's disarray?

FINN GRAFF

Even if events in Iraq do eventually turn in the direction that the Administration hopes, history is weighted against the Republicans. Only once since the death of Franklin Roosevelt has a party kept the Presidency for three consecutive terms—when George H. W. Bush defeated Michael Dukakis, in 1988. Bush the Elder, though, had the advantage of being Ronald Reagan's Vice-President, and Reagan, despite being damaged by the Iran-Contra scandal, was greatly esteemed by his party. Few of the men running now for the Republican nomination are likely to embrace George W. Bush's record. "If the Democrats can't win the Presidency in 2008, they'll never win the Presidency," David Keene, the chairman of the American Conservative Union, said not long ago.

And now Karl Rove, the man Bush has called his "boy genius," is among those being blamed by conservatives for the Party's problems—blame that he shares with others who have attempted to transform the party. One is Newt Gingrich, the strategist behind the 1994 Republican takeover of Congress, who could not hold together his coalition, and resigned. (Gingrich also faced ethics problems—he was accused of using tax-deductible donations for political purposes.) Another is Tom DeLay, who served as House whip under Gingrich and became Majority Leader under Gingrich's successor, Dennis Hastert, and who left facing charges relating to campaign finance. Perhaps most of all, conservatives blame Rove's boss, George W. Bush.

When I asked Rove if the persistence of bad news, along with criticism from conservatives, has made the White House a moody place, he let loose an apparently authentic laugh. "This is a great place to work," he said. "It's inspiring to work here. It's neat, particularly when you've got a boss whose attitude is 'What can we do today to advance our goals? What are the big things we could be doing?' " Such statements fail to acknowledge that the President has been spending much of his time fighting congressional attempts to limit his mobility in Iraq and to force the resignation of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. For Rove, the future is still Republican. "I don't think by any means it's a sure thing, but I do think there are these big societal changes driving us, and I think that the conservative movement and the Party through which it operates are going to benefit," he said. "That's not to say that it's going to be an ever-upward line. And it also doesn't mean that smart Democrats can't do something about it."

Rove thinks that more voters now are being influenced by technology and religion. "There are two or three societal trends that are driving us in an increasingly deep center-right posture," he said. "One of them is the power of the computer chip. Do you know how many people's principal source of income is eBay? Seven hundred thousand." He went on, "So the power of the computer has made it possible for people to gain greater control over their lives. It's given people a greater chance to run their own business, become a sole proprietor or an entrepreneur. As a result, it has made us more market-oriented, and that equals making you more center-right in your politics." As for spirituality, Rove said, "As baby boomers age and as they're succeeded by the post-baby-boom generation, within both of those generations there's something going on spiritually—people saying it's not all about materialism, it's not all about the pursuit of material things. If you look at the traditional mainstream denominations, they're flat, but what's growing inside those denominations, and what's growing outside those denominations, is churches that are filling this spiritual need, that are replacing sterility with something vibrant, something that speaks to the heart of the individual, that gives a sense of purpose." Rove believes what he has always believed: that the Christian right and, to a lesser extent, tax- and regulation-averse businessmen will continue to assure Republican victories.

Early G.O.P. Presidential polls, though, don't seem to confirm this analysis. Rudolph Giuliani stands more firmly than any of his rivals for abortion rights and civil unions for gays, and at this point appears to be in the lead. Bush, polls suggest, has also lost the support of some self-described conservatives. (Thirty-three per cent of voters in 2004 identified themselves that way.) But Rove cautioned against reading too much into polls, or the results of the 2006 midterm elections. "It's important to keep in perspective how close the election actually was," he said. "Three thousand five hundred and sixty-two votes and we would have had a Republican Senate. That's the gap in the Montana Senate race. And eighty-five thousand votes are the difference in the fifteen closest House races. There's no doubt we've taken a short-term hit in the face of a very contentious war, but to have the Republicans suffer an average defeat for the midterm says something about the underlying strength of conservative attitudes in the country." Rove's arithmetic was correct, but he sounded like John Kerry, who, shortly after his defeat in the 2004 election, told me, "I received the second-highest number of votes in American history."

"Those aren't three-star-restaurant pants."

Rove places the blame for the election results on the recent scandals in Congress—congressmen who placed themselves in the orbit of Jack Abramoff, the lobbyist at the center of the Republican ethics meltdown; and the former congressman Mark Foley's relationships with congressional pages—rather than the Administration's management of the Iraq war. "If you look at the exit polling, the No. 1 issue, particularly among swing voters, was corruption and behavior," he said. "After Foley, people said, 'It's just too much.' After that, spending was the No. 2 issue."

Rove suggested, as Bush repeatedly has, that history will ratify the decision to invade Iraq. "You know, the Bush doctrine—'Feed a terrorist, arm a terrorist, train a terrorist, fund a terrorist, you're just as bad as a terrorist,'" he said. "It's going to remain our national doctrine, and it's going to be very difficult, I think, if not impossible, to dismiss this, just as it will be to dismiss the doctrine of preëmption. In the future, the country is not going to let the dangers fully materialize, and we're not going to allow ourselves to be attacked before we do anything about it. The question was, did we have the right intelligence about Saddam Hussein? No. Was it the right thing to do? Yes."

Leaving the White House, I passed through the West Wing reception area, where a single visitor—an Army officer, perched on a couch—was waiting for an appointment. It was Lieutenant General Douglas E. Lute, who that evening was to be named "war czar," a job that few others seemed eager to take.

The appointment of a war czar four years after the invasion of Iraq has struck some as a late and insufficient response to the crisis, and has been a reminder that the Administration, ever since its halting response to Hurricane Katrina, has been judged harshly on questions of competence. Newt Gingrich is one of those who fear that Republicans have been branded with the label of incompetence. He says that the Bush Administration has become a Republican version of the Jimmy Carter Presidency, when nothing seemed to go right. "It's just gotten steadily worse," he said. "There was some point during the Iranian hostage crisis, the gasoline rationing, the malaise speech, the sweater, the rabbit"—Gingrich was referring to Carter's suggestion that Americans wear sweaters rather than turn up their thermostats, and to the "attack" on Carter by what cartoonists quickly portrayed as a "killer rabbit" during a fishing trip—"that there was a morning where the average American went, 'You know, this really worries me.' " He added, "You hire Presidents, at a minimum, to run the country well enough that you don't have to think about it, and, at a maximum, to draw the country together to meet great challenges you can't avoid thinking about." Gingrich continued, "When you have the collapse of the Republican Party, you have an immediate turn toward the Democrats, not because the Democrats are offering anything better, but on a 'not them' basis. And if you end up in a 2008 campaign between 'them' and 'not them,' 'not them' is going to win."

If Gingrich were an ordinary politician and not someone brimming with futurist and other ideas—some logical, some loopy, many interesting—he would have passed his sell-by date a long time ago. But Gingrich is not ordinary; he did not, in the manner of many ex-congressmen, become a lobbyist (like Dick Armey, the Majority Leader when Gingrich was Speaker). Instead, he has spent his exile lecturing, appearing on Fox News, writing and co-writing books at a ruthless pace (eight so far, including a recent novel about Pearl Harbor), and advertising his thoughts on how to transform government and how to save his party. Gingrich's strength was always insurgency, and after he won his majority, his Achilles' heel, which was actual governance, became visible to the world. In 1994, his Contract with America promised, among other things, to reform the way Congress did business; in 1995 and 1996, in a standoff with the Clinton White House, parts of the federal government were shut down for a total of twenty-seven days, and Gingrich received much of the blame. Three years later, Republicans, who by then held only a narrow majority in the House, lost five seats; the Gingrich revolution was over and so was Gingrich's congressional career.

But Gingrich seemed to me to believe that, having led one Republican revolution, he is well positioned to lead another—one that would place him in the position of Presidential candidate. Though he says that he won't decide whether he is running until the fall—and although the clamor for his candidacy has so far not been shrill—he is behaving in many ways like a candidate, taking on speaking engagements and constructing elaborate defenses of his record. He has admitted having committed adultery, and he sought penance on the radio show of James Dobson, a prominent leader of the Christian right. He is also mindful of his weight. When we met recently at the McLean Family Restaurant, in suburban Virginia, near the headquarters of the C.I.A.—one of many government agencies that he says require "radical transformation"—he ordered oatmeal with no milk or sugar. Republicans will be studying Gingrich's waistline this summer for signs of a pre-campaign regimen of self-denial just as closely as Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama will be studying Al Gore's.

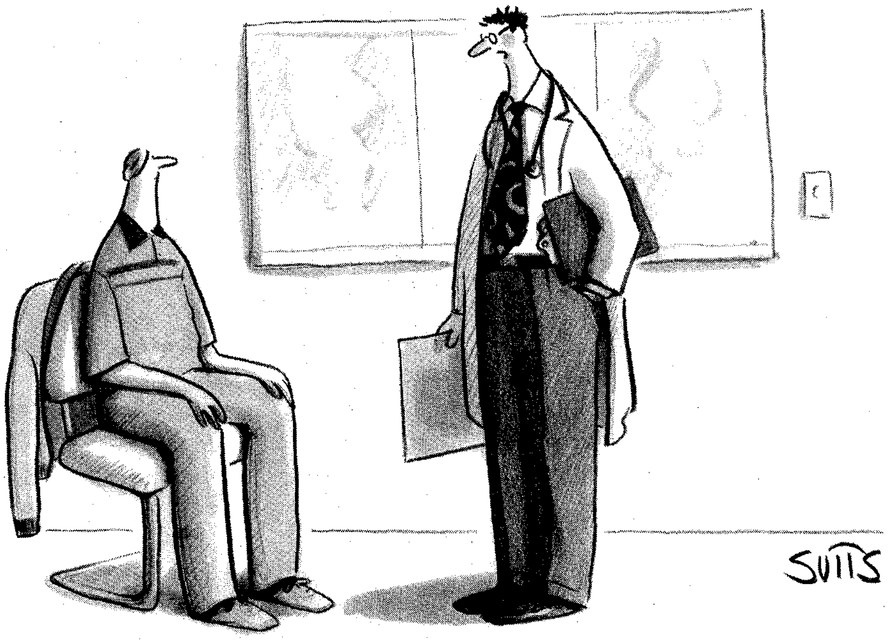
Gingrich does not seem to have aged much in the eight years since he left Congress. His manner has not changed much, either. He has a fondness for ideas that he deems large and not much talent for small talk. Charm is a chore, though he was not at all crabby—as he sometimes is—when we met. The condition of his party had put him in a noticeably buoyant mood. On being asked whether Republicans would be able to capture the White House in 2008 or 2012, he said, smiling, "Or 2016, or 2020."

Not since Watergate, Gingrich said, has the Republican Party been in such desperate shape. "Let me be clear: twenty-eight-per-cent approval of the President, losing every closely contested Senate seat except one, every one that involved an incumbent—that's a collapse. I mean, look at the Northeast. You can't be a governing national party and write off entire regions." For this disarray he blames not only Iraq and Hurricane Katrina but also Karl Rove's "maniacally dumb" strategy in 2004, which left Bush with no political capital. "All he proved was that the anti-Kerry vote was bigger than the anti-Bush vote," Gingrich said. He continued, "The Bush people deliberately could not bring themselves to wage a campaign of choice"—of ideology, of suggesting that Kerry was "to the left of Ted Kennedy"—and chose instead to attack Kerry's war record.

The only way to keep the White House in G.O.P. hands, Gingrich said, would be to nominate someone who, in essence, runs against Bush, in the style of Nicolas Sarkozy, the center-right cabinet minister who just won the French Presidency by making his own President, Jacques Chirac, his virtual opponent. Sarkozy is a transforming figure in French politics, Gingrich said, and he suggested that the only Republican who shared Sarkozy's "transformative" approach to governing was, at that moment, eating a bowl of oatmeal at the McLean Family Restaurant.

"What's fascinating about Sarkozy is that you have an incumbent cabinet member of a very unpopular twelve-year Presidency, who over the last three years became the clear advocate of fundamental change, running against an attractive woman"—the Socialist leader Ségolène Royal—"who is the head of the opposition," Gingrich went on. "In a country that wanted to say, 'Not them,' he managed to switch the identity of the 'them.' He said, 'I'm different from Chirac, and she's not. If you want more of the same, you should vote for her.' It was a Lincoln-quality strategic decision."

Gingrich's ego is robust—Barack Obama is not the only national politician to fashion himself as an inheritor of Lincoln's mantle. He seems convinced that the Republican Party's salvation lies in his fecund mind, and believes that truly transformative conservative ideas, when well articulated, will be enough to attract large majorities. He cited global warming as an example. Very few Republicans these days talk



"Anyhoo, it's malignant."

• •

about global warming as a reality, the way Gingrich does. Before a recent debate on Capitol Hill with John Kerry (reporters were promised a "smackdown"), Kerry seemed flustered when Gingrich shifted the debate from the basic science to a discussion of market-based solutions to the problem. Gingrich explained it this way: "There's a short-term way out of this and a long-term way out of this. The long-term way is to create a new intellectual battleground, which you can't do if you start out by saying 'No, no, no, no, no.' But if you say, 'O.K., let's talk about, for example, how you best have conservation in America, do you think trial lawyers, regulators, bureaucrats, and higher taxes are the answer, then you ought to be with Al Gore. If you think that markets, incentives, prizes, and entrepreneurs are the answer, you ought to be with us.' "

I asked Gingrich if it was a mistake to appeal to the religious-conservative base of the Party on such issues as the fate of Terri Schiavo, a woman who was living in a persistent vegetative state. In 2005, Republicans—supported by, among others, DeLay, and the former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist—engineered quick passage of a special law requiring that Schiavo be kept on a feeding tube, against her husband's wishes but in accord with her parents' demands and the demands of many evangelicals and conservative Catholics. (Frist, a physician, diagnosed Schiavo, noting that she was "clearly responsive," after watching her on videotape.) The courts intervened, and the feeding tube that kept Schiavo alive was removed; she died thirteen days afterward. That episode, though, frightened members of what the anti-tax agitator Grover Norquist calls the "leave-me-alone coalition." It certainly frightened centrists, without whom neither party could flourish.

Gingrich has been criticized lately by some conservatives—most notably DeLay—for spending too much time reaching out to center-right voters; he advocates modernizing the government rather than making it smaller. (Gingrich and DeLay barely speak; their relationship came apart in the late nineteen-nineties, when Gingrich suspected DeLay of engineering an attempted coup.) It is true, Gingrich said, that he wants to bring the center into a coalition with the right, "because I want to give the right power. The right can have power only by being allied with the center."

That, Gingrich said, was Rove's mistake. "I think he didn't understand the second-order effect of base mobilization. The second-order effect is that you drive away the center because you become more and more strident at the base." What you end up with, he said, is cases like Schiavo's, and the feeling that Republicans risk alienating "America's natural majority."

"The Schiavo case was one of my proudest moments in Congress," Tom DeLay told me not long ago in the basement grill room of the Capitol Hill Club, a Republican retreat, where congressmen and senators can mix with lobbyists, a number of whom are former congressmen. DeLay was tan and smiling and tranquil, which was striking, considering that he is currently under indictment in Texas on money-laundering charges, and that many Republicans blame him for allowing a culture of corruption to thrive when he led the Republican caucus. DeLay helped create the so-called K Street Project, designed by Grover Norquist to move Republican congressional staffers into key positions at lobbying firms and trade associations; he was closely linked to Jack Abramoff, and two senior former staff members have already pleaded guilty to corruption charges in the Abramoff case.

"I don't let those kinds of things bother me," DeLay said of the controversies that churn around him. "I'm at peace with myself," he added, laughing. "I know that bothers some people. I'm very relaxed." He pointed to his cup of decaffeinated coffee. "This is pretty much the strongest stuff I drink these days. I'll occasionally take a glass of wine with dinner."

Earlier this year, he published a memoir called "No Retreat, No Surrender" (his spokeswoman says that he was not stealing from Bruce Springsteen, and that the phrase has been used many times throughout history, including by the Spartans and as the title of a Jean-Claude Van Damme movie), in which he claimed that as a young congressman he would on occasion drink ten to twelve Martinis at a time. In this period, he earned the nickname Hot Tub Tom. Then he found Jesus and, he said, stopped sinning. In the book, he freely confesses to committing adultery. "I had put my needs first," he told me. "I was on the throne, not God. I had pushed God from His throne."

In the book, DeLay criticizes Gingrich for, among other things, conducting an affair with a Capitol Hill employee during the 1998 impeachment trial of Bill Clinton. (The woman later became Gingrich's third wife.) "Yes, I don't think that Newt could set a high moral standard, a high moral tone, during that moment," DeLay said. "You can't do that if you're keeping secrets about your own adulterous affairs." He added that the impeachment trial was another of his "proudest moments." The difference between his own adultery and Gingrich's, he said, "is that I was no longer committing adultery by that time, the impeachment trial. There's a big difference." He added, "Also, I had returned to Christ and repented my sins by that time."

In fact, DeLay speaks of Gingrich with undisguised contempt. "He's got this new shtick now—'solutions,' he calls it, like government is the new solution. Government isn't the solution; it's the problem." DeLay smiled. "Did you see that he had a love match with John Kerry on global warming?" he said. "That's not going to help him with the Presidential race."

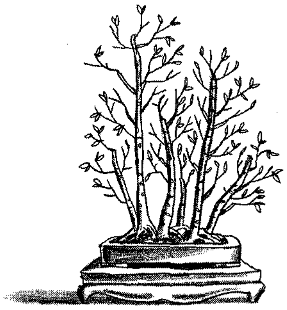
A tall, thin man of about fifty approached DeLay, who jumped up to hug him. "This is the man who really saved me," DeLay said. He introduced the man as the Reverend Ken Wilde, an Idaho evangelical leader, who founded the National Prayer Center on Capitol Hill. The center houses volunteers who pray for America's leaders. "When I was going through my troubles, it was Ken who really stepped up," DeLay said.

Wilde had a brief message for DeLay. "The church is strong," he said. When he left, I asked DeLay if he thought the church—evangelicals, who make up the core of his support—was strong enough to save the Republican Party. In this case, he agreed with Gingrich. "We're having a time of it right now," he said. "We don't have a good shot at winning 2008. I'm not saying we don't have a shot, but it's not good. It's going to take six years to rebuild."

DeLay says that when, in the coming years, he is not fighting the indictment in Texas (he insists that he is not guilty) he will be building a conservative grassroots equivalent of MoveOn.org. "God has spoken to me," he said. "I listen to God, and what I've heard is that I'm supposed to devote myself to rebuilding the conservative base of the Republican Party, and I think we shouldn't be underestimated." He said that Republicans should spend their impending exile reminding themselves what they stand for. "I see this as a cleansing process, where you can return to your principles, which are order, justice, and freedom—the basic principles of the conservative movement. We have to redefine government based on conservative principles, we have to win the war against our culture, and we have to win the war on terror."

DeLay's critics find his reinvention as a guardian of conservative ideals implausible. "I don't think he ever understood what it was about," Dick Armey, who preceded DeLay as Majority Leader, told me. "The revolution was about changing public policy for America, but he thought the revolution was about winning a Republican majority in which he would have an important position in the leadership. For him, keeping the majority was about keeping power for himself."

In Armey's view, DeLay saw earmarking—the practice by which members of Congress can attach spending projects to larger bills—as a means of keeping the Republicans in permanent power. One such project, in Alaska, involved building a bridge that would connect a small city to an airport on an island, at a cost of more than two hundred million dollars; the so-called "bridge to nowhere" became a national joke and a scandal. "Politics is morally and intellectually inferior to any other criteria when you're making choices about spending," Armey said, "and they fell into making political choices. There was an explosion of earmarks in the last several years. You use earmarks to help the guy who needs it to win elections, but then what happens is people say, 'I don't need an earmark, but it sure would be nice' "—that is, to bring pork to the congressman's home district.



Conservative leaders have always entertained suspicions about George W. Bush's conservative credentials—in part because his father raised taxes while President, and in part because "compassionate conservatism," which was a mantra of Bush's 2000 campaign, sounded to some dangerously like "big-government conservatism." DeLay's willingness to spend tax money in order to keep his party in power came as a surprise to those who believed that he was a doctrinaire, limited-government conservative. "Bush was never a conservative, but Tom DeLay was one of us and he betrayed us," Richard Viguerie, a founder of the modern conservative movement, says. "He's like a lot of these guys. They campaign against the cesspool. 'I'll clean up the cesspool of government,' but after a while they all say, 'I made a mistake—it wasn't a cesspool, it was a hot tub.' That's what they called him, you know, Hot Tub Tom."

Viguerie, whose new book is called "Conservatives Betrayed: How George W. Bush and Other Big Government Republicans Hijacked the Conservative Cause," told me how the conservative movement has been undermined: "It's not any one thing, but, when you add everything up, what you have is a massive overreach of executive powers, and massive overspending by people who claim they're conservatives. Every President, with hardly any exceptions, will take as much power as he gets. That's what Presidents do. Bush has tried more than most. And it was supposed to be the Republicans in Congress who would do oversight of the President, so that he wouldn't get away with too much abuse of power. But they abdicated that role. It was all about the maintenance of power, and now look where they are." He continued, "This President has strengths and weaknesses, but he has a major character flaw, and that's that he will brook no criticism and his people won't, either. And the whole Party gave in to him on that."

Jeff Flake, a four-term congressman from Arizona, is one of the Republicans who have turned on the Administration. He is a Mormon, with five children, and his cheerful personality seems to have somewhat protected him from retribution from a Party leadership that doesn't like what he's saying. "The Republican Party has always had three tenets—economic freedom, limited government, and individual responsibility," he told me not long ago. "If you look at any of those three issues lately, you'd be hard-pressed to say that the Republican Party really stands for any of them. Look at the growth of government. And I'm not just talking about war spending and homeland security. You can put that aside, and we've still grown substantially. Look at that tracking-poll question that's always asked: 'Whom do you trust more to manage the public's finances, Republicans or Democrats?' Republicans have always had a big edge there. And that has narrowed over the years, and now it's reversed."

Flake said that he and Representative Mike Pence, an Indiana conservative, often joke that they feel like Revolutionary War-era minutemen who arrived five minutes after the battle was finished. "You know, it took three runs for Mike to get to Congress. We both got here in 2000, we show up and report for duty, and we're told, 'All right, No Child Left Behind is the first mission.' That's the first thing we do. We arrived for the revolution, and we're six years late. And then we thought, Maybe this is an aberration, wait until the next term, and then what is it? Prescription drugs. We were just too late." Limited-government conservatives believe that No Child Left Behind is a federal intrusion into a matter best left to states, and that the prescription-drug bill represents the further expansion of entitlements.

When I mentioned Flake's objections to Rove, he said, "I don't accept the label 'big-government conservatism.' I think the object here is how do you fundamentally reform the big institutions of government in a way in which you drive them toward market choice, to the individual, to decentralization." He went on, "Flake is one of the few people who are consistent. Because he will say, 'Not only should we not have the prescription-drug benefit but also we shouldn't have Medicare, either. But most members of Congress, virtually every conservative member of Congress, has said, 'Look, we've settled that issue; we're going to have Medicare.' "

Flake, like many Republicans on the Hill, no longer seems interested in Rove's theories. "If we would stick to our principles, we could be a natural governing majority," he said. "But our leaders have not stuck to the principles they say they follow." Like most Republicans, he sees little chance in the near term for his party's revival. "It's a tough environment, and, frankly, I'm not sure we've bottomed out yet. There are still a lot of investigations going on, and the war is going on. We're going to have to turn it around, but I'm not sure how we're going to do it. All we can hope for, I guess, is for the Democrats to overreach on something."

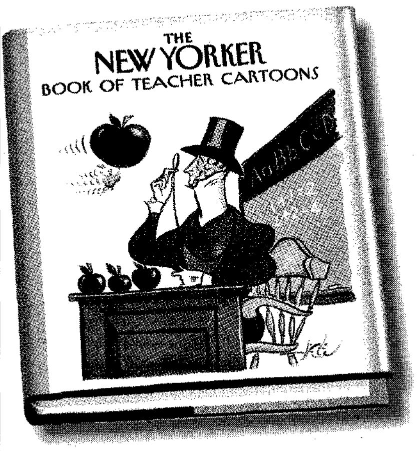
The Democrats are not strangers to overreaching, and America's political parties tend to make quick recoveries. In 1964, Republicans—and especially conservatives—despaired after Barry Goldwater lost in a landslide to Lyndon Johnson; four years later, Richard Nixon won the White House. In 1976, Jimmy Carter defeated Gerald Ford in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal that drove Nixon from office, but Carter lost four years later to Ronald Reagan—and Republicans gained control of the Senate. Not long ago, I asked the G.O.P. leader in the House, John Boehner, if he thought it possible for his party to keep the White House and take back Congress in 2008. His answer was revealing. "The Democrats have gone too far," he said. "They've grossly miscalculated what the American people want on national security." When I asked him to describe a set of post-Iraq, post-corruption, post-earmark-scandal ideas that would propel the Republicans back into contention, he said, "Members have to do the hard work, using their own brains to develop our proposals for the future." Then he said, "The Democrats are going to stumble. It's just the nature of things." ♦

FULLER EXPLANATION DEPARTMENT

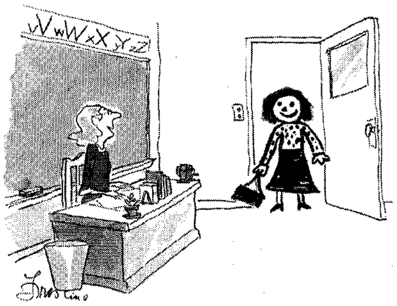
From the Towanda (Pa.) Daily & Sunday Review.

When asked why Bradford County had only two semifinalists, Gloria Davis with the National Merit Scholarship Program said, "If there are only two semifinalists in your county, it is because only two students in the county attained a score high enough for semifinalist standing."

Straight-A Humor



The best *New Yorker* cartoons celebrating students, their devoted parents, and the teachers who negotiate the delicate balance between them.



"Mrs. Hammond! I'd know you anywhere from little Billy's portrait of you."

Available at cartoonbank.com and wherever books are sold.

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

ONE SMALL STEP

BY ZACHARY KANIN

> NASA astronaut Sunita "Suni" Williams completed her version of the Boston Marathon on Monday—more than 210 miles above Earth. "I'm done! Woo hoo!" Williams told Mission Control after running 26.2 miles on a treadmill at the international space station. . . . She finished, unofficially, 4 hours, 23 minutes and 46 seconds later as the station traveled over Russia.
>
> —*Associated Press.*

Excerpts from the log of the Russian cosmonaut Fyodor Yurchikhin:

April 16—Suni Williams competed in the Boston Marathon on our treadmill. Although she did not win, she said that she enjoyed the "fresh air" and "being outside." NASA is very pleased with us for finally doing something that people on Earth aren't horrified by.

April 19—Today, Suni used the StairMaster to begin climbing Mt. Everest. She predicts that it will take several months to complete her ascent, but she is refusing food and water. Our colleague Oleg Kotov tried to explain that mountain climbers on Earth do not deprive themselves of sustenance, but she insisted that she would "hunt for food, like a human."

May 17—Suni reached the top of Mt. Everest this morning, far ahead of schedule. She said that she wanted to experience the summit without oxygen, but Oleg would not open the door to the shuttle. Suni begins her descent tonight.

May 18—A thought: it is weird to see someone sleep in a tent on a StairMaster.

May 20—Today, Suni had us pitch baseballs to her while she used the elliptical machine. She said that she had just gone four-for-four and pitched a perfect game for the New York Mets.

May 22—I didn't even know this, but I guess yesterday Suni entered, campaigned for, and lost a state-senate race in Connecticut.

May 23—Today, Suni decided to moonwalk across the Grand Canyon on the treadmill. I told her that a treadmill does not simulate walking on air and she asked me if I was going to stand in the way of her being the first person to moonwalk across the Grand Canyon. Then she didn't even walk backward, because she said that "treadmills are always going in reverse, if you think about it."

May 24—Suni came to my berth last night and told me she wanted to lie in the strong arms of her husband on Earth. I declined, and a few minutes later I heard the Nautilus machine gently whirring in the darkness.

May 25—Today, Suni watched "The Wizard of Oz" and listened to "Dark Side of the Moon" while using the NordicTrack.

May 26—This afternoon, Suni rapped the national anthem while chugging Red Bull and running in place. We thought it was a joke, but then she asked us for her "official time."

May 27—Suni was up until 5 A.M. writing a paper on "The Catcher in the Rye" for a ninth-grade English class she is attending on her stationary bike. "I have perfect attendance," she claims.

May 28—I don't know how this came about, but today Suni made me and Oleg run the Boston Marathon on the treadmill while she officiated. She says that this makes her the first woman to "compete in and officiate at the Boston Marathon." Oleg said he was going to check on this fact, but then she added "in space," and we had to admit that she was probably right. ♦

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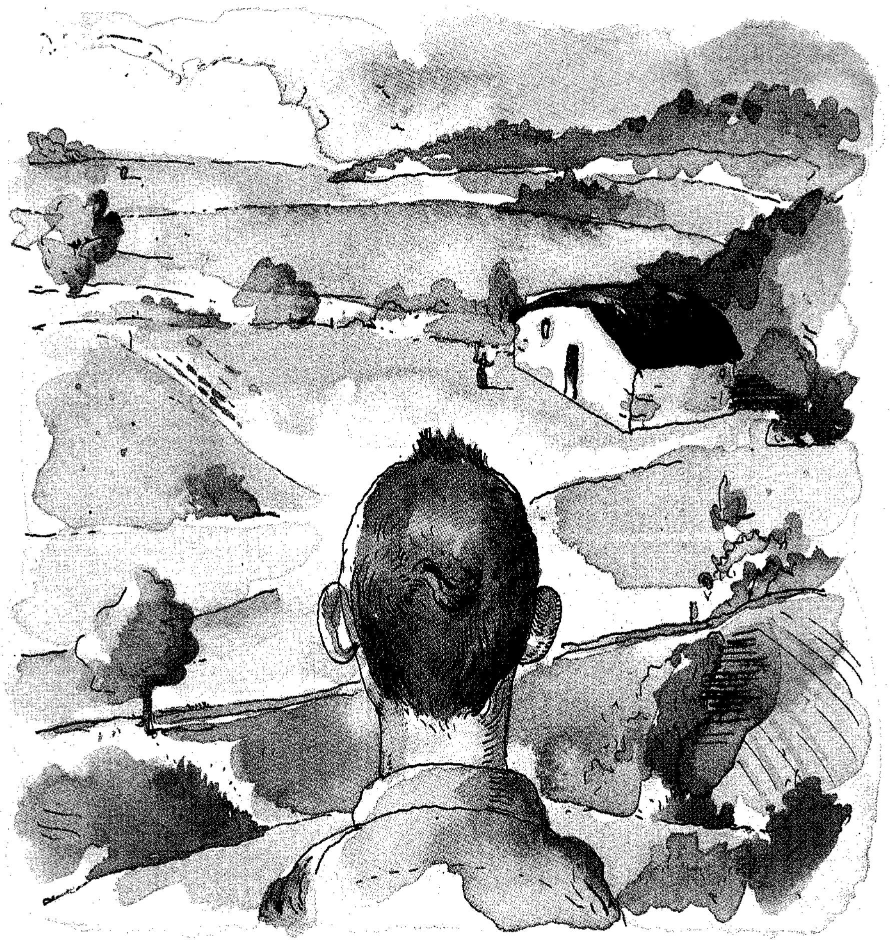
REFLECTIONS

THE MAN IN THE HUT

He really wasn't my friend.

BY DAVID SEDARIS

A single road runs through our village in Normandy, and, depending on which direction you come from, either the first or the last thing you pass is a one-story house—a quonset hut, really—made of concrete blocks. The roof is covered with metal, and large sheets of corrugated plastic, some green and others milk-colored, have been joined together to form an awning that sags above the front door. It's so ugly that the no-trespassing sign reads as an insult. "*As if,*" people say. "I mean, *really.*"



BARRY BLITT

The hut was built by a man I'll call Jackie, who used to live there with his wife and his wife's adult daughter, a gangly retarded woman I'll refer to as Clothilde. On summer evenings after their dinner, the wife would dress her daughter in pajamas and a bathrobe and walk her either through the village or in the opposite direction, where the road steepens and winds in a series of blind curves. Depending upon the weather, Clothilde wore either plaid bedroom slippers or a pair of rubber boots that came to above her knees and changed her walk to a kind of goose step. I'd heard from neighbors that she attended a special school, but I think it was more of a sheltered workshop, the type where you perform simple tasks. Though I never heard her speak, she did make noises. It's a contradiction in terms, but, if forced to describe what came out of her mouth, I'd call it an upbeat moan, not unpleasant—more joyful, really. I can't say that Clothilde was a friend, but it made me happy to know that she was around. The same was true of her mother and her stepfather: the whole family.

Jackie had some sort of problem with his leg, and usually walked no farther than he had to. He drove a truck so small and quiet it seemed like a toy, and every so often, as I was walking into town, he'd pull over and offer me a ride. On one of these trips, he attempted to explain that he had a metal plate in his head. My French comprehension wasn't very good at the time, and his pointing back and forth between his temple and the door of the glove compartment only managed to confuse me. "You invented glove compartments? Your glove compartment has ideas of its own? I'm sorry . . . I don't . . . I don't understand."

I later learned that when he was a boy Jackie had found an unexploded grenade in one of the nearby fields. He pulled the pin and threw it, but not quite far enough; thus the metal plate and his messed-up leg. His hearing had been affected as well, and his eyes were deeply shadowed and encircled by spidery scars. Crew cut, dented brow, lower jaw jutting just slightly forward: had he been tall, his appearance might have startled you, but, as it was, he was pint-size, five feet two, maybe five-four, tops. When the villagers spoke of Jackie, they used the words "slow" and "gentle," and so it seemed outrageous when the police stormed the ugly cinder-block hut and took him off to jail. Someone or other spoke to the local councillor, and within an hour everyone knew that Jackie was suspected of sexually molesting his wife's grandchildren, who occasionally visited from their home, an hour or so away. It was speculated that he also molested Clothilde, but I couldn't bring myself to believe it. Hugh says I just don't want to believe it, and I tell him he's right—I don't. She and her mother left our village shortly after Jackie was taken away, and I never saw either of them again.

With no one to maintain it, the house that was ugly became even uglier. Our neighbors across the road would often comment on what an eyesore it was, and, while agreeing, I'd lament the sorry state of my French. Oh, my comprehension had improved—I

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THIS SUMMER, TWENTY RUNNERS WILL CROSS FOUR CONTINENTS

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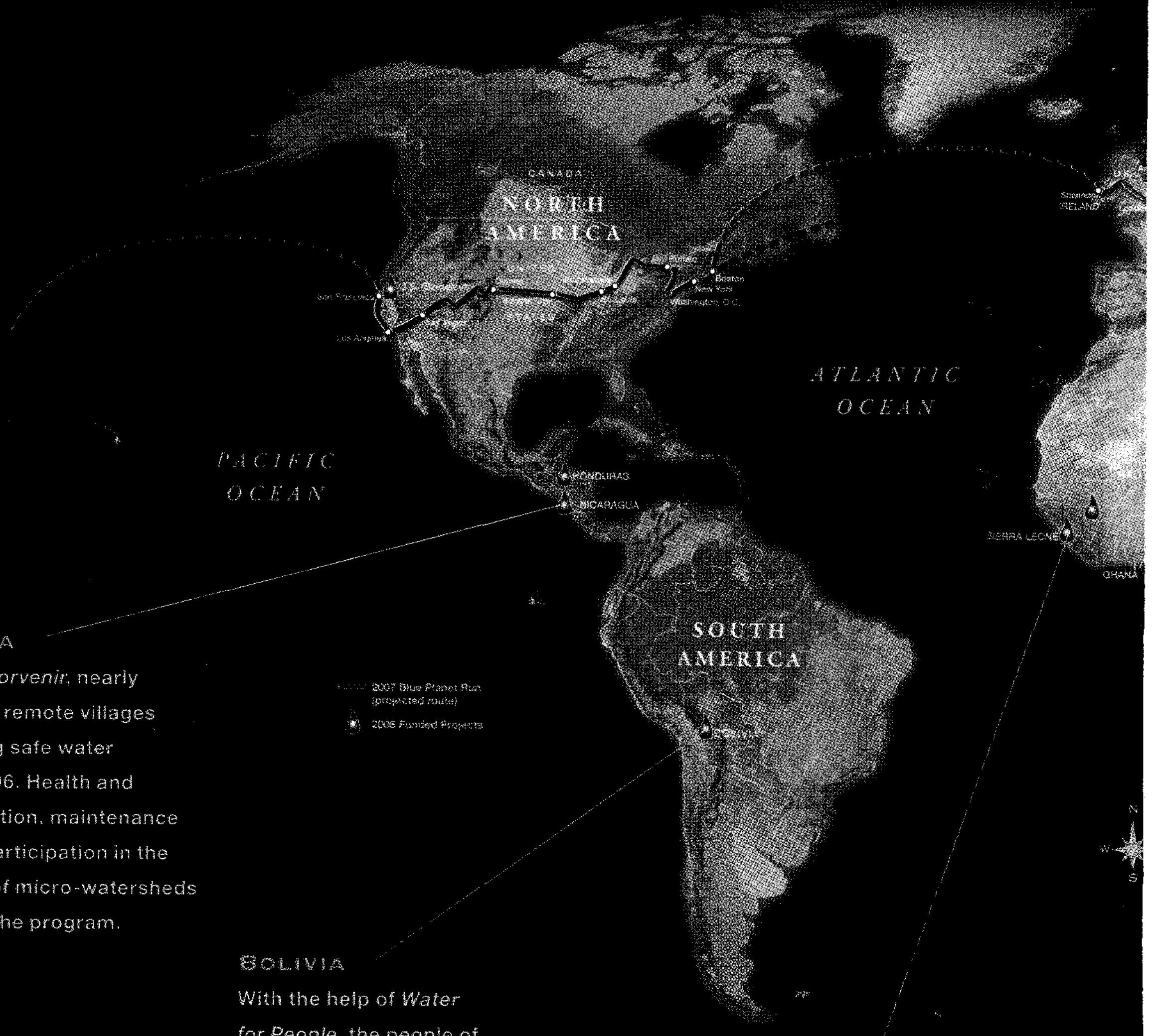
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2007 Blue Planet Run (projected route)
2006 Funded Projects
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NICARAGUA
Thanks to *El Porvenir*, nearly 200 families in remote villages started getting safe water systems in 2006. Health and hygiene education, maintenance training and participation in the reforestation of micro-watersheds are all part of the program.

BOLIVIA
With the help of *Water for People*, the people of Boqueron K'asa are building a community-wide water system as well as receiving training in hygiene education, operations, maintenance and financial management.

SIERRA LEONE
Lack of a water and sanitation infrastructure forces women and children to walk long distances for water. In 2005, a rainwater harvesting system was built by *Safer Future*, which allows the community to devote more time to income activities and gives children time to go to school.

SUCCESS STORIES AT A GLANCE

As seen in NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE at's the idea behind the 2007 Blue Planet Run.® Create an epic global event that not only

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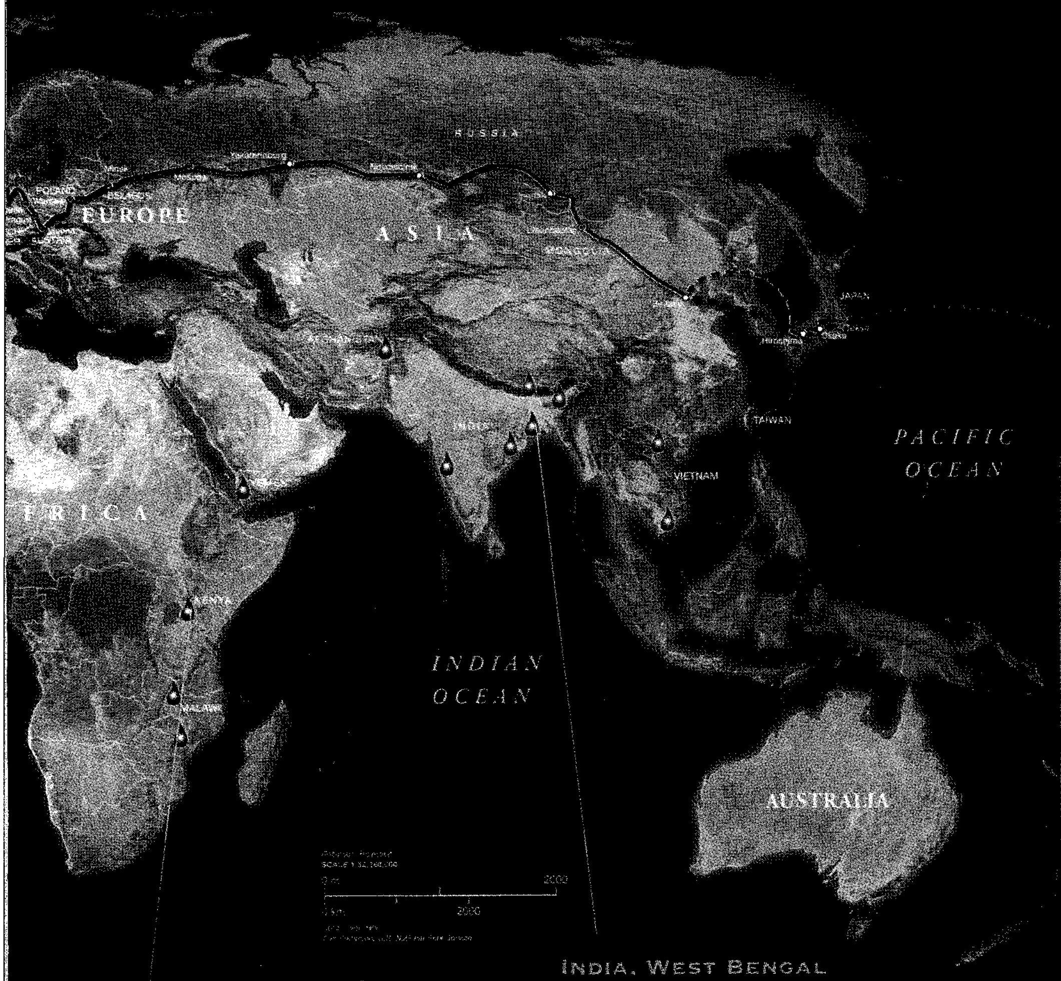

THE STRUGGLE FOR SAFE WATER

- 6,000 children under five die every day because of unsafe water and poor sanitation.
- 1.1 billion people in developing countries have inadequate access to safe drinking water.
- Water-related diseases are the single largest cause (50%) of human sickness and health-related death in the world.
- Many women and children spend up to 6 hours per day fetching water.
- Families often spend up to 25% of their income to purchase water and carry it home.

KENYA

The Kisii hospital's 30-year-old water system not only delivers 37,000 gallons less than what its patients require, but frequent extended breakdowns leave the hospital with only enough water for essential services. *Rotary International* is co-funding a new system overseen by Rotary *District 5450 that will serve* 525,000 patients annually.

INDIA, WEST BENGAL

Highly poisonous arsenic is found in the deep groundwater used by nearly 100 million people. *Project Well* is constructing a self-supporting safe source of community water. In addition, *Barefoot College* has implemented rainwater harvesting systems so that students can gain access to arsenic-free water for the first time.

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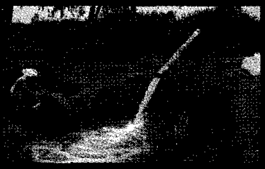
AN EPIC PROBLEM

For 1 in every 5 people on the planet, getting any water at all can mean walking all day to find it. Then, pumping it out or scooping it up and carrying it back home. Only to do it all again the very next day. Add the potential for contamination to this process, and it's no wonder waterborne illness is the single largest cause of death and disease in the world.

A CAUSE SET IN MOTION



By creating global awareness of the world's safe drinking water crisis, the Blue Planet Run Foundation hopes to mobilize citizens around the globe to help provide safe drinking water to 20 million people by 2015. Already, the Blue Planet Run Foundation has funded more than 135 projects in 13 countries and provided safe drinking water to more than 100,000 people.

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The Blue Planet Run, presented and sponsored by The Dow Chemical Company, is an unprecedented event dedicated to carrying the Blue Planet Run Foundation's message of hope to the world. Leaving New York on June 1 of this year, an international team of 20 citizen runners will run 24 hours a day in 10-mile individual relay segments for 95 days, passing the baton at more than 1,500 exchange points worldwide.

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could understand just about everything that was said to me—but when it came to speaking I tended (and still do) to freeze up. One solution would be to spend more time with people, but I don't see that happening anytime soon. The phone rings and I avoid it. A neighbor knocks and I duck into the bedroom or crouch behind the daybed until they've left. How different things might be, I think, if, like Jackie, I had no more hiding places. Though harsh in other respects, prison would be an excellent place to learn a foreign language—total immersion, and you'd have the new slang before it even hit the streets. Unlike the French school that I actually attended, this one, when it came to verbs, would likely start with the imperative: "Bend over," "Take it"—that kind of thing. Still, though, you'd have your little conversations. In the cafeteria, in the recreation room or crafts center, if they have them in a French prison, and I imagine they do. "Tell me, Jean-Claude, do you like the glaze I've applied to my shapely jug?"

Of the above, I can say, "Tell me, Jean-Claude, do you like the . . . jug?"

"Glaze" is one of those words that shouldn't be too difficult to learn, and the same goes for "shapely." I'm pretty good when it comes to retaining nouns and adjectives, but the bit about applying the glaze to the shapely jug—that's where I tend to stumble. In English, it's easy enough—"I put this on that"—but in French such things have a way of biting you in the ass. I might have to say, "Do you like the glaze the shapely jug accepted from me?" or "Do you like the shapely jug in the glaze of which I earlier applied?"

For safety's sake, perhaps I'd be better off breaking the one sentence into three:

"Look at the shapely jug."

"Do you like the glaze?"

"I did that."

If I spent as much time speaking to my neighbors as I do practicing imaginary conversations in the prison crafts room, I'd be fluent by now, and could quit making excuses for myself. As it is, whenever someone asks how long I've been in France I wonder if it's possible to literally die of shame. "I'm away a lot," I always say. "Two and a half months a year in America, and at least two in England, sometimes more."

"Yes, but how long ago did you come to France?"

"What?"

"I asked, 'How. Long. Have. You. Been. In. France?'"

Then I might say, "I love chicken," or "Big bees can be dangerous," anything to change the subject.

What I needed was an acquaintance, and what I wound up with was Jackie. This was after his release, obviously. He'd been gone for about three years when I walked past the hut one day and noticed a pair of little black socks hanging on the clothesline.

"Who do you suppose those belong to?" I asked the woman across the road, and she pulled an unusually sour face and said, "Who do you think?"

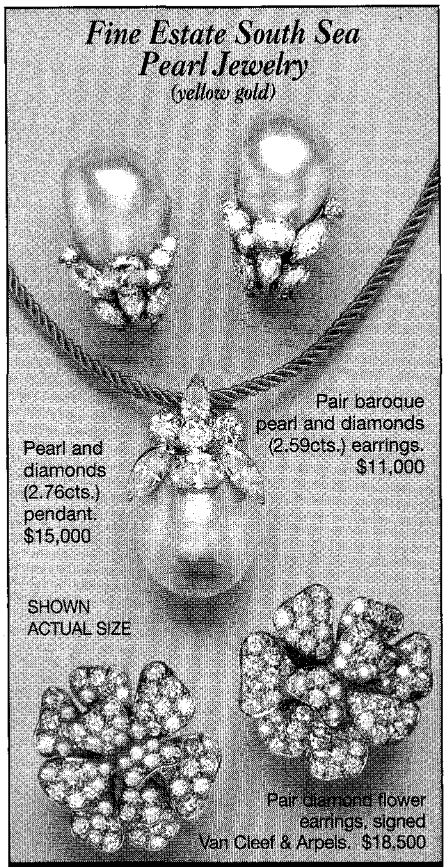
I'd imagined that, like his wife and stepdaughter, Jackie would move away and start over, but it seemed he had no place to go and no money to go there with. After hanging out his socks, he picked up his rake and hoe and started getting his lawn in shape. It was strange. Were an American sex offender to return home, there'd be a big to-do. Here, though, it was all very quiet. No meeting was held that I was aware of, but somehow or other it was agreed that no one would look at or speak to this man. He would be treated as if he were invisible, and, with luck, the isolation would drive him away.

He'd been back in his hut for a week or so when I walked by and saw him inside his front gate, worrying something with the tip of a cane. Jackie had always been kind to me, so when he looked up and said hello I employed one of the formalities I'd learned years earlier in French class. "I am content to see you again," I said. Then I shook his hand.

"What did you do that for?" Hugh asked later, and I said, "Well, what *could* I do? Someone says hello and sticks his hand out, and you're just supposed to walk away?"

"If he's a child molester, yes," he said. But I'd like to see what he would have done in the same situation.

A few years later, after Jackie died of cancer and the garden he so carefully tended had turned to weeds, I gave the baccalaureate address at a certain American university. When the speech was finished, I joined a procession of deans and distinguished fellows back to the president's house, and it was there that a well-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known politician approached and extended his hand, saying, "I just want you to know how much I enjoyed that." Now, this politician—it's not that I simply disagree with him. I despise him. I loathe him. My friends and I, the way we throw his name around, you'd think we were talking about the Devil himself. Spittle forms in the corners of our mouths as we denounce him, his party, and the people we refer to as his henchmen and cronies.

I hadn't known that this politician was going to be in the procession that day; rather, I turned around and there he was, the two of us dressed in these flowing robes, like wizards.

"I just want you to know how much I enjoyed that." So did I place a pox upon him? Did I spit in his face, or even turn my back?

Of course not. With everyone watching, I looked up and said, "Oh. Thank you." And because he had held out his hand I took it, just as I had taken Jackie's after his release from prison.

I said to Hugh after the graduation, "But I wasn't enthusiastic about it. Sure, I said 'Oh' and 'Thank you,' but anyone who knows me would know that I was faking it, that I didn't really mean the 'thank you' part."

"Well," Hugh said, "I guess you showed him."

Had the politician been my neighbor, I might have moved. That's how disgusted I would have felt, but Jackie, because of the metal plate in his head, because you could put a magnet to his temple and it would stay there, aroused pity rather than anger, or at least he did in me. I didn't go out of my way to pass his hut, but neither did I go out of my way to avoid passing it. If he was in the yard, he'd say hello and I would say hello back, or "Yes, it certainly is warm," or whatever seemed an appropriate response. And in this way—a word here, a wave there—little by little the summer advanced, and Jackie came to see the two of us as friends. One afternoon he invited me inside his front gate to show me the tomatoes he'd planted.

"Well," and I looked to see if any of our neighbors were watching. No one was, so I opened the latch, saying, "O.K., sure."

During the years that he had been away, Jackie's hair had gone from brown to gray. His eyes were flat and more heavily shadowed, and what had once been a pronounced limp had grown more subtle. It seemed that while in prison he had had a hip replaced, and the way he walked now was miles better than it had been before the operation. "Hey," he said, and he gestured behind him in the direction of his open front door. "Do you . . . want to come in and look at my X-rays?"

As I later said to Hugh, "Do you tell a person, 'No—I don't want to see pictures of your insides'? Of course not. How can you?"

The hut was a lot cozier than I'd imagined it. In the kitchen were the same sorts of things you'd find in the homes of any of our neighbors: a postal calendar picturing a kitten, a hanging copper saucepan turned into a clock, souvenir salt-and-pepper shakers in the shapes of castles and peasants and wooden shoes. The room was tight and clean and smelled of watermelon-scented dish detergent. From the kitchen, I could see the bedroom, and rows of medications neatly arranged on the dresser. Little radio. Little TV. Little easy chair—it was like a troll's house.

Jackie's X-rays were as large as bath mats, and he washed and dried his hands before removing them from their separate envelopes and presenting them to me. When handed a photograph of someone's wife or children, I know how to form the appropriate compliment. "How pretty!" I can say, or, "How like you," "What nice eyes," "What a pleasant smile." Hip replacement presented more of a challenge, and I alternated between "I like the pin" and, simply, "Ouch." On or about the fifth X-ray, I looked through a clear patch of plastic, past the front yard and into the hills on the opposite side of the road, where another of our neighbors grazes his sheep. The flock had been shorn earlier that day, and those in view seemed oddly aware of how dumpy and vulnerable they looked.

"I have to go," I said, and in the way of good neighbors the world over, Jackie said, "Stay, why don't you? I was just going to make some coffee."

Several weeks later, he invited me in to look at his government-issued I.D. card.

"Oh, I don't want to put you out."

"Not at all," he said, and two minutes

NEVER-ENDING BIRDS

That's us pointing to the clouds. Those are clouds
of birds, now we see, one whole cloud of birds.

There we are, pointing out the car windows.
October. Gray-blue-white olio of birds.

Never-ending birds, you called the first time—
years we say it, the three of us, any

two of us, one of those just endearments.
Apt clarities. Kiss on the lips of hope.

I have another house. Now you have two.
That's us pointing with our delible whorls

into the faraway, the true-born blue-
white unfeathering cloud of another year.

Another sheet of their never ending.
There's your mother wetting back your wild curl.

I'm your father. That's us three, pointing up.
Dear girl. They will not—it's we who do—end.

—*David Baker*

later I found myself back at his kitchen table. The I.D. was kept in a bright plastic folder, the sort of thing that a young girl might carry. On the cover was a cartoon pony having his mane braided by a troop of friendly ladybugs.

I think I said, "All right, then." Jackie opened the folder and withdrew his identity card, a small color photograph attached by grommets to a stiff piece of paper. As when looking at the X-rays, I didn't know quite what to say. His birth date, his height, the color of his eyes. He was obviously proud of something, but I couldn't tell what it was.

"See," he said. "Right here. Look." He pointed to the corner and I saw that the government had classified him as a Grand Mutilated Person. The "grand" business was new to me, but the other part was familiar from riding the Paris buses. "These seats are reserved for the elderly and for those who have been mutilated in the war," the signs used to read. It's a much stronger word than "wounded" or "handicapped," and I imagine that, if we used it in the United States, enlistment in the volunteer Army would fall by at least half.

As a grand mutilated person, Jackie was entitled to a discount on all train travel. "With the metal plate, I got fifty per cent off, but now, with the hip replacement, it's gone up to seventy-five," he told me. "Both for me and the person I'm travelling with. Seventy-five per cent off!"

I handed him back his I.D. card. "Those are some real savings."

"You know," he said, "we should maybe take a trip together. Over to Brittany, down to Marseilles—wherever we wanted."

It took a moment for his "we" to register, and another moment to phrase an appropriate response. "That would be . . . something," I finally said, thinking later that at least I didn't lie. It would be something. "Where's David?" the neighbors might ask. And Hugh could say, "Oh, he and Jackie are off on vacation. You know how those two are, give them seventy-five per cent off on their tickets and the sky's the limit."

It was only after I left the house that I started feeling insulted. What made Jackie think that I'd want to travel with him? Could he possibly have believed I'd be swayed by the discount, or did he think, the way certain people might, that the two of us belonged together, the homosexual and the child molester being cousins of sorts, like ostriches and emus? I'm usually not paranoid about this kind of thing, but in a small village you sometimes have to wonder. Why had the neighbors to our immediate left, a truck driver and his family, never said anything more than hello to us—this after years of living next door. Then, there was the man two houses down, who stopped me one afternoon and asked where I slept. "I've been in that place of yours and there's only one bedroom," he said. This is the same man who chained a goat to a tree in his back yard and let it starve to death, so in his case it was probably the craziness talking. Just as with Jackie it was the loneliness. I usually passed his hut every other day, but after the incident with his I.D. card I cut it back to twice a week and then to once a week. Late that August, I travelled to Scotland, and, on my return, an irritated Hugh collected me at the train station. "What's eating you?" I asked, and he gunned the engine, saying, "Ask your little friend, why don't you."

What happened was that Jackie had come looking for me. He'd knocked on our door while I was out of town and asked in his loud country voice if David could come out and play. Those weren't his exact words but, according to Hugh, they might as well have been. Not everyone saw the child molester calling my name on our front stoop, but the ones who did see were pretty well connected, and it took no time at all for the story to spread.

From that day on, I always wore headphones when walking past Jackie's hut. He may have called out to me, but I neither heard him nor raised my head to look in his direction. And it went on this way for three years, until I sort of forgot about him. We didn't speak again until after he got his diagnosis. The cancer, I'd heard, was on his esophagus, and its progress was swift and merciless. In a matter of months, he was carved down to nothing, face all gaunt, pants held up with a short length of rope. I saw him on his front stoop a week before he died, and when I waved he beckoned me inside the gate, and we shook hands one last time. I found myself wondering if the cancer had upped his train discount, bumped it from seventy-five per cent to something even higher, but it's a hard question to ask when you're not fluent. And I wouldn't have wanted him to take it the wrong way. ◆

"[A] FIRST NOVEL SO STRONG, STARTLING, AND MOVING, THAT IT'S A THOROUGHBRED FROM THE FIRST PAGE."
—*The Boston Globe*

The God of Animals
A NOVEL
Aryn Kyle

"[KYLE] IS A SEAMLESS STORYTELLER. . . . IT WILL BE WONDERFUL TO WATCH HER WRITE MORE AND MORE." —*Los Angeles Times*

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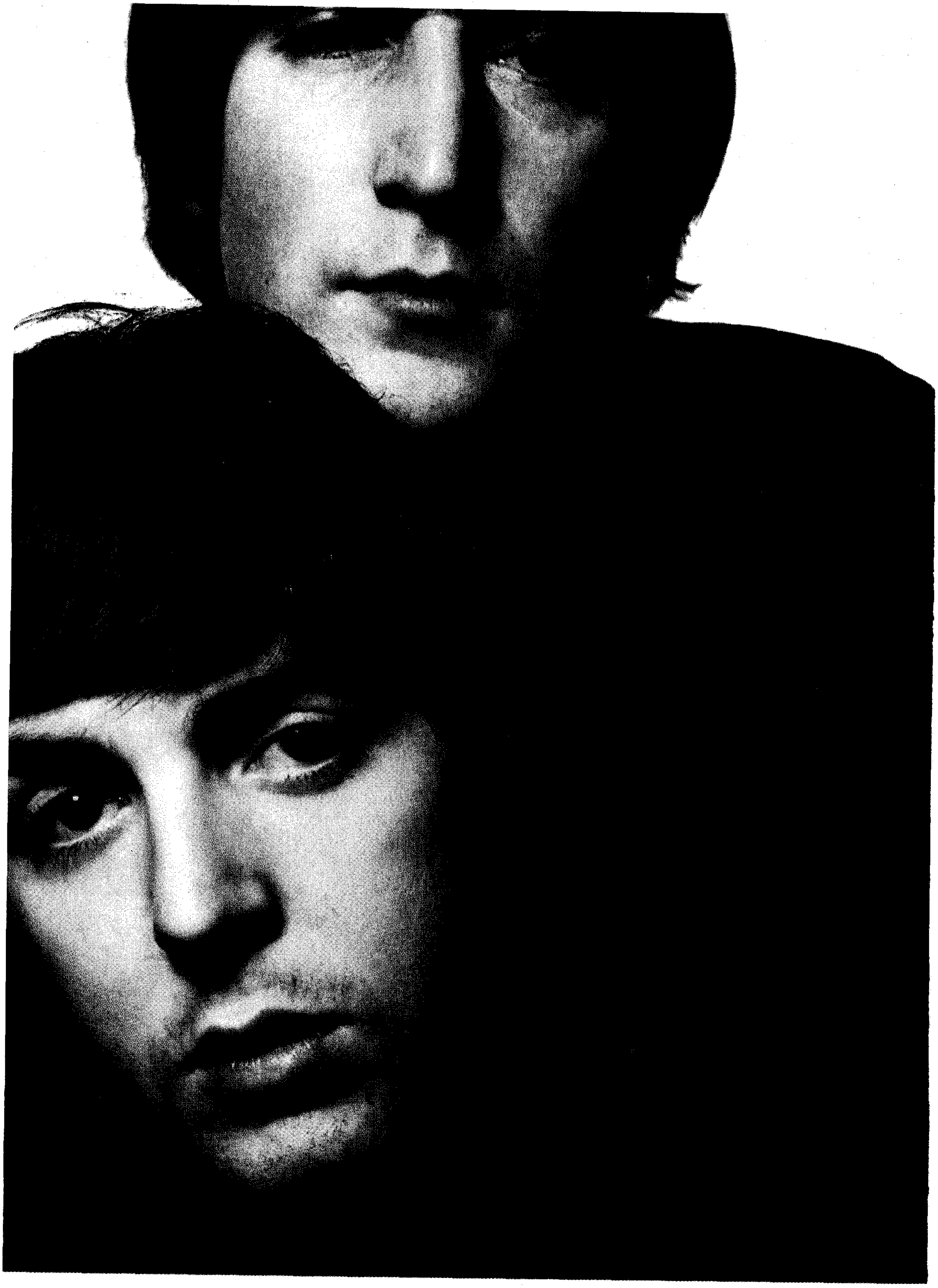
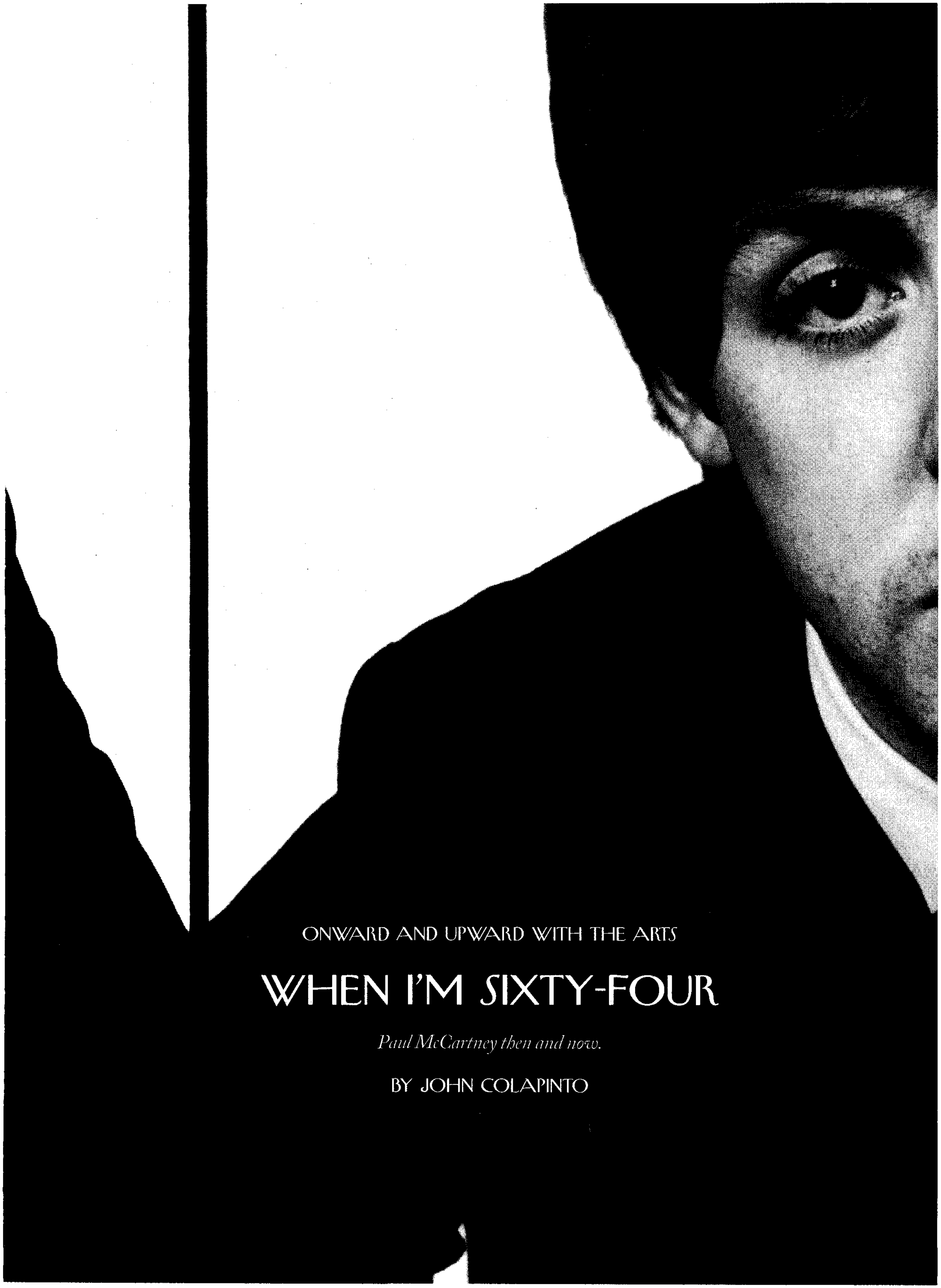




ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

WHEN I'M SIXTY-FOUR

Paul McCartney then and now.

BY JOHN COLAPINTO

Paul McCartney's music-publishing business occupies three stories in an elegant eighteenth-century building on Soho Square, in London. His office is on the third floor and is reached by a small elevator off the lobby or by a narrow staircase, whose walls are lined with framed photographs of McCartney and other sixties rock stars—including a black-and-white shot of a young Brian Jones taken by McCartney's first wife, Linda, who died in 1998. The office, which overlooks the square, is furnished with a rolltop desk, a vintage jukebox, two large de Koonings, and a carpet featuring stylized musical notes—a Sammy Cahn-like touch that is nevertheless pure McCartney. Though he conceived the idea for "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," the first art-concept rock LP, he has never made a secret of his Tin Pan Alley inclinations. Besides being the surviving member of the most successful pop-songwriting partnership of the twentieth century, he is a music impresario whose company, M.P.L. Communications, owns rights to more than three thousand songs and Broadway shows, including Buddy Holly's catalogue and the musicals "Annie," "Guys and Dolls," and "Grease"—all part of a show-business empire that, along with the royalty he earns on every Beatles record sold, has made him one of the richest men in England. While accountants on floors above and below him administer his musical properties, McCartney oversees various creative projects. When I visited him in May, these included a DVD compilation of his videos, including some Wings songs; a DVD of "Ecce Cor Meum," a lush choral work; and his latest pop album, "Memory Almost Full," a suite of deeply personal songs that reflect, often starkly, McCartney's awareness of aging and loss as he approaches his sixty-fifth birthday, on June 18th. (It is a milestone that he admits he finds difficult to contemplate. "The thought is somewhat horrifying," he told me. "It's like 'Well, no, this can't be me.' ")

McCartney was sitting on a small sofa at one end of his office, peering at a laptop computer on the coffee table in front of him. He was dressed in a long-sleeved gray T-shirt, rust-colored pants in Glen plaid, and leather-free black running shoes. Arrayed in chairs around him were his project manager, Paddy Spinks; a female assistant; and five young men—employees of a Web-design company that is helping to promote "Memory Almost Full," which will be released next week. Last year, McCartney decided not to renew his contract with E.M.I. Records, which had been his label since 1962, when the Beatles were signed by George Martin. McCartney's new album will be the début release from Hear Music, a record label co-founded by Starbucks, and will be sold at the company's coffee shops as well as at record stores and on iTunes—a first, since for years Apple Corps., the multimedia company that the Beatles founded in 1968, had been battling Steve Jobs over the use of the name Apple.

McCartney, who said that he had grown "sick" of the long lead times and "boring" promotional practices of conventional labels, decided to try this new method of distributing his music as "a way to get as excited about releasing a record as we used to be in the old days, with the Beatles." He nevertheless seemed to find some aspects of the digital-download revolution difficult to adjust to. After looking at sample screen-saver images of himself lounging in a black armchair (the images will be available for download on his Web site), he and the Web team discussed how to promote "Nod Your Head," a rousing rock tune on "Memory Almost Full."

"Why not give the whole track as a free download and let people do their own videos?" Nick, one of the Web-team members, suggested. "They'll post them on YouTube."

McCartney glanced at Spinks, who sat just outside the circle. Nick, anticipating an objection, explained to McCartney that on the Internet you have to surrender a certain amount of control to fans, and see what happens. "That's the essence of viral marketing," he said.

"No, no," McCartney said, eager to show a willingness to go along with the new methods. "I'm O.K. with giving the whole track free." But he sounded a little uncertain. He looked again at Spinks.

"Let me think about it," Spinks said.

McCartney turned to a video that the team planned to post on his Web site: shaky images of the New York studio where he recorded "Memory Almost Full." As they huddled around the laptop to watch the clip, McCartney asked, "Shouldn't we let people know I shot this?"

"We could, but—" one of the young men began.

"Because if Dylan shot that," McCartney continued firmly, "I'd wanna know."

The Web team began discussing ways to identify McCartney as the video's author. One man suggested superimposing the word "PaulCam" over the images. McCartney said that he liked the idea. The meeting began to drift, and McCartney looked at his watch. The Web-team members quickly rose, and McCartney, dispensing pleasantries, ushered them, along with his assistant and Spinks, to the door. Then, putting on a suit jacket that matched his pants, he headed to lunch at a nearby restaurant.

McCartney's hair, which he admits to dyeing, still falls in bangs over his forehead, but there are deep lines in his face, and the doe-like eyes that once set teenage girls screaming have a rheumy quality. Yet, to a remarkable degree, his body retains its youthful vigor, and his stride, when he reached the sidewalk, called to mind the twenty-three-year-old who bounded across the grass at Shea Stadium in 1965, and the twenty-seven-year-old who strode barefoot over the zebra crossing on the cover of "Abbey Road."

McCartney had not gone three steps on the sidewalk when a burly young man with a military haircut lunged into his path and thrust something at him: a CD—"The Beatles 1"—along with a black marker. McCartney took them and opened the CD's jewel case.

"Put it to Lloyd," the man said.

McCartney signed the CD and handed it back. "There you go, mate," he said. Then, hands in his pockets, he resumed his walk.

The speed and violence with which the fan had accosted McCartney were jarring, and I remarked that the man could have been another Mark David Chapman.

"Yeah, or it could have been Jesus,

Previous spread: Lennon and McCartney in 1965, the year of "Help!" and "Rubber Soul." Photograph by David Bailey.

come to give a blessing," McCartney said. He added, "When your number's up, it's up."

McCartney has recently suffered a series of tragedies, beginning with the death, from breast cancer, of Linda, to whom he had been married for twenty-nine years. George Harrison died of cancer in 2001, and, last year, McCartney separated from his second wife, Heather Mills, after four years of marriage. The split—and impending divorce—prompted ugly stories in the tabloids; several of them quoted leaked court papers in which Mills accused McCartney of drunkenness, and charged that he had pushed her into the bath during a quarrel and cut her on the arm with a broken wineglass. The week I arrived in London, the newspapers were filled with the testimony of a former bodyguard, who claimed that McCartney had been suffering from depression. McCartney told me that he usually tries to ignore the stories, but that he had seen those about the bodyguard's claims. "This was actually in a shop where I was picking up another newspaper," he said. "So you read it, and it's just not true, and then you have to make the decision as to whether to counter it and say, 'This is not true.' But there's too many of them. And I would just be spending my life not having lunch, not playing guitar, not making a record, just merely answering untrue allegations." For this reason, he said, he has made a policy of not commenting on the divorce proceedings.

Still, there is an unmistakable sadness in McCartney's gaze and muted manner, and even the up-tempo rock songs on "Memory Almost Full" are tinged with melancholy. The album's penultimate track, "The End of the End," is a fragile ballad in which he imagines his death and hopes that it will result not in grief among his survivors but in the telling of funny stories at his wake.

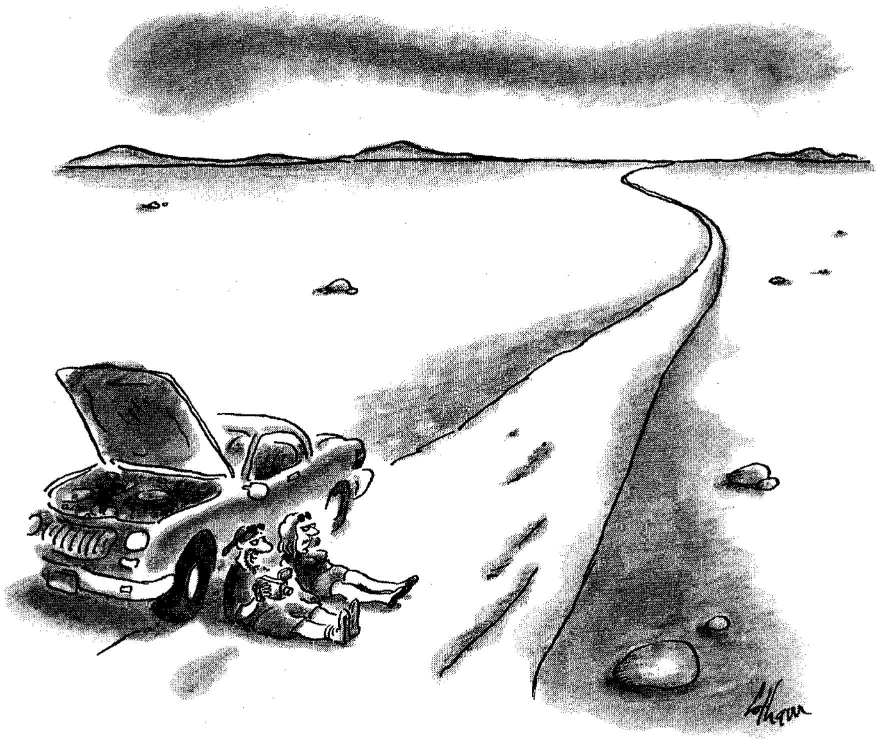
At Signor Zilli, a small, expensive Italian restaurant, McCartney was greeted by a grinning maître d' with a comically pronounced Italian accent: "Ahh, Mister-a Paul-a! You come! You looka wonderful!" "It's the medication," McCartney quipped, glancing apologetically at the other diners. He was shown to a table near the front of the room; within a few minutes, a waiter appeared with an eggplant appetizer, a pasta entrée (he has been a vegetarian since the early seventies), and a glass of red wine. While he ate, McCartney talked about his life as a Beatle and his relationship with John Lennon. He recalled how Lennon had winced the first time McCartney played for him the opening lines of "I Saw Her Standing There," which had originally been "She was just seventeen / She'd never been a beauty queen." He mentioned that "If I Fell" was perhaps his favorite song by Lennon, and he expressed astonishment that the Beatles had ever come into existence. "What are the odds that those four guys would find each other?" he asked.

The chef, who had emerged from the kitchen, approached our table. He asked McCartney to sign his jacket. McCartney gamely autographed the front of the man's uniform, then said that he had to return to his office. On the walk back to Soho Square, McCartney detoured down an alley, where, on the side of a shop's wall, about ten feet off the ground, there was an enigmatic graffito made of tiny mosaic tiles depicting a television and, beside it, a primitive drawing of a head. McCartney had recently seen people photographing the images, and this had given him the idea of creating his own guerrilla graffiti campaign in the neighborhood, to promote his new album. He pulled out his cell phone and took a photograph of the wall. A man pushing a hand truck did a double take and stopped, staring.

"Hey," McCartney said in a neutral tone.

"You want me to push you up the street, then?" the man asked, in a Cockney accent.

McCartney immediately relaxed. "Yeah," he said, laughing. "I'll just hop on." A young man in tinted glasses appeared and gestured brusquely to McCartney with his cell phone. The man with the hand truck moved a step closer. McCartney realized that he was cornered. "Er—yeah," he said. The man in the tinted glasses aimed his cell phone camera at McCartney, shifted his own head into the frame, and took a picture. Then, wordlessly, he took off. McCartney was clearly irritated. "O.K., I don't usually do that," he said, as he hurried up the street. The man with the hand truck caught up to him and asked for an autograph. McCartney, apologizing, said he had nothing to sign. The man complimented him on his 1983 album, "Pipes of Peace." McCartney thanked



"Let's make a low-budget movie till help arrives."

him and began walking, even faster than before.

"That was my fault," he said. "I stopped moving."

The next day, McCartney was driven to Sussex, about two hours southwest of London, by his assistant John Hammel, who has worked for him for thirty-two years. McCartney owns a house in Sussex and has built a recording studio nearby. He had an appointment at the studio with Carlos Bonell, a classical guitarist who was helping him with some technical aspects of a guitar concerto. Bonell arrived a few minutes before McCartney did and waited in a small kitchen adjoining the control room. "Other pop musicians who have tried classical music often just tack together short, two- or three-minute snippets of melody to build up a nine-minute movement," Bonell said. "Paul establishes a theme and knows how to develop it; he completely understands classical composition. Which is incredible in its way, because he can't read or write music." Bonell explained that his task in the studio is to transcribe on musical staff paper the passages that McCartney has composed on his guitar and on his computer. His first session with McCartney, in early May of last year, happened to fall on the morning when the British newspapers broke the news of McCartney's separation from Mills. Bonell hadn't heard. "I got here and before I met Paul I was asked by his assistant to 'be discreet,'" he said. "I thought, Discreet? O.K., he's a Beatle, after all. Then I met him and he told me straight out about it. Then he got down to work." McCartney's ability to focus on his music impressed Bonell. "You'd be in the middle of a passage, the phone would ring, and it would be Paul's solicitor," he said. "He would go and talk to him. Then, bang, it was right back into the piece." Keith Smith, McCartney's recording engineer, who was standing nearby, said that McCartney had come to the studio nearly every day for months after the separation. "He actually worked harder," Smith said.

McCartney appeared in the kitchen just after 1 P.M., wearing a blue dress shirt and brown corduroys. He was in a jaunty mood. The previous evening, he had attended the Classical B.R.I.T. Awards, in London, where he had won in the category for best album, for "Ecce Cor Meum" ("Behold My Heart"), which he had begun composing in 1998, around the time that Linda was dying of cancer, and which he had completed, often in tears, he has said, after her death. I asked if he had gone out to celebrate after the ceremony. "No, actually," he said. "Got a good night's sleep, since I knew I was working today."

He sipped some tea, then entered the control room, which was hung with batiks and dominated by a twenty-foot-long sixty-channel mixer. Bonell sat with a ream of staff paper in his lap; Smith was at the mixing board. McCartney faced them in a red swivel chair, and Hammel brought him a piece of whole-grain toast covered with melted cheese. While he ate, he talked with Smith about the awards ceremony, which they had both attended. Smith mentioned two female winners, who, he said, had been looking for McCartney afterward. "You're kidding me!" McCartney said. "Ah," he added in a mock-tragic tone, "they're too young."

Smith opened a sound file on his computer: a portion of the concerto that Bonell had recorded a year ago. No one in the room had heard the section since then. "Not since last May," Smith said. "A bad time."

"Not a wonderful month, no," McCartney murmured. He leaned back and put his feet on the edge of the mixing console.

Smith clicked his mouse, and music poured from the speakers mounted above the console—a plangent swell of strings and brass overlaid by the precise embroidery of a classical guitar playing a melody with a Spanish influence. McCartney had used a synthesizer to create the orchestral sounds; later, he planned to assign real instruments to replace the computer-generated ones. "A very mellow trombone would get you that," he said, as a soft, rounded tone joined the mix. "French horn, even. Very pianissimo."

When the passage ended, an assistant entered the studio holding a CD recording of McCartney performing with Jools Holland, the British keyboard player and television host, and a small band on a recent radio program. McCartney instructed the assistant to put the CD in the player. The room filled with the sound of "Dance Tonight," the opening track on "Memory Almost Full." McCartney plays the mandolin and sings ostensibly happy lyrics ("Everybody gonna dance tonight / Everything gonna feel all right"), but his voice, once preternaturally smooth, has developed a rasp, and the song's minor chords gave it a mournful air. McCartney listened, nodding in time to the music. When the song was over, Bonell pointed out that McCartney's mandolin had been slightly out of tune.

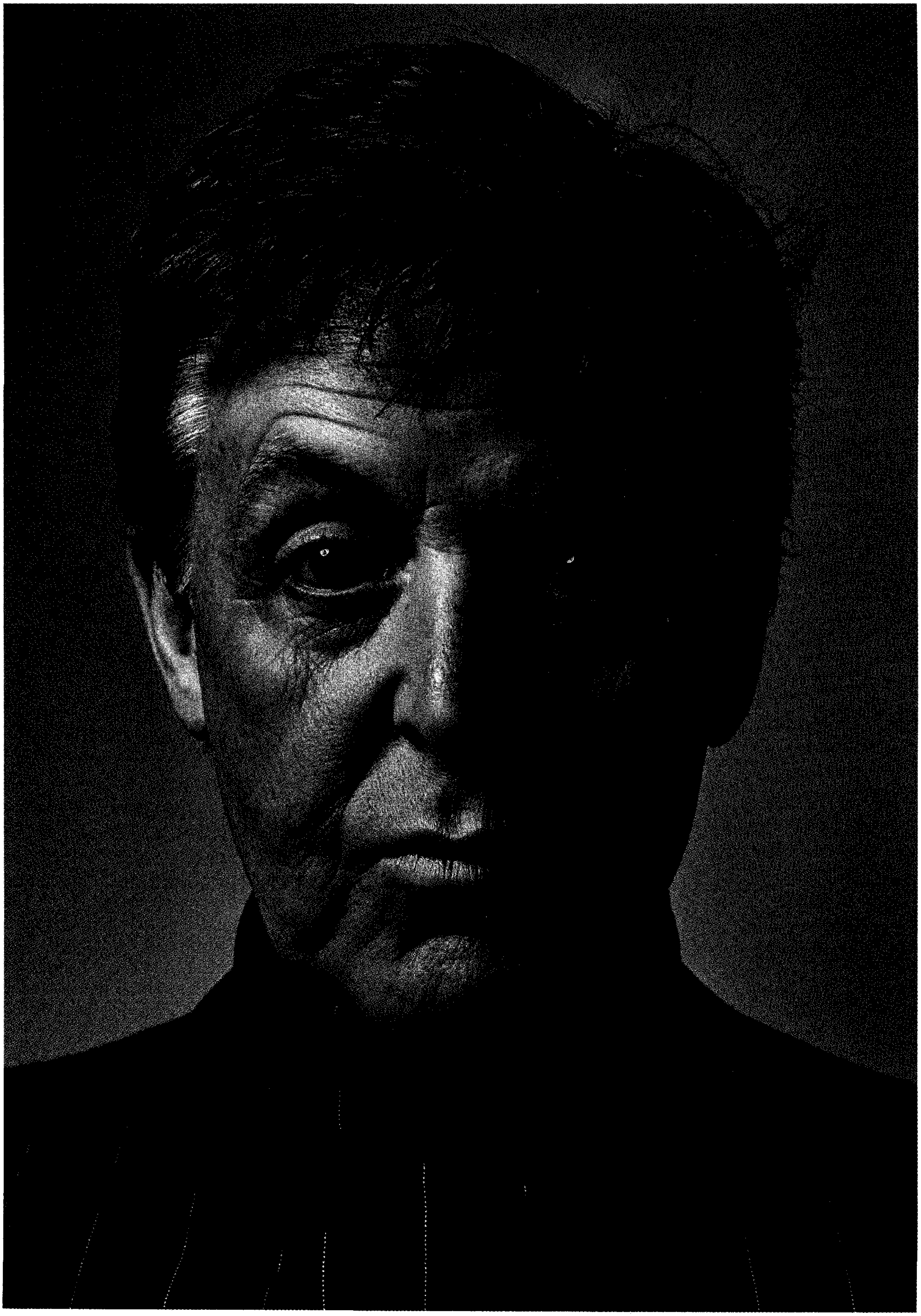
"Yeah, I know," McCartney said. "But I liked that. The Beatles always called it 'a fairground sound'—the way music sounds when you hear it live. We used it on some of our early LPs."

As Smith cued up a new section of the guitar concerto, McCartney continued to reminisce. "I remember when the Beatles first started to use orchestral arrangements," he said. "George Martin would hire classical musicians to come to E.M.I. studios. There was a lot of smirking from the classical guys in the early days. When we were recording 'Hey Jude,' we asked them to add some handclaps in the singalong at the end. One of them refused. He said, 'I was not trained to clap.'" Bonell and Smith laughed.

Bonell began to transcribe a guitar passage while McCartney talked about his intermittent attempts to learn to read music: first, as a boy, when he briefly took piano lessons, and grew bored; and, later, as a Beatle, with the same result. "Now I don't even want to learn," he said. "The notes don't seem to go with what I'm hearing." He said that Lennon also could not read or write music. "Someone once told us that the Egyptian pharaohs couldn't read or write—they had scribes to put down their thoughts. So John and I used to say, 'We're like the pharaohs!'"

After discussing the arrangement for a sweetly melodic movement called "Romance," McCartney and Bonell went into an adjoining room with hardwood floors containing a concert grand piano, vibes, guitars, and other instruments. They sat beside each other on stools, facing a window through which they could see Smith in the control room. Both men picked up guitars and prepared to work on some passages that McCartney wanted to refine. But first he played the opening bars of a Bach bourrée. He said that he and George Harrison used to play it together

McCartney's new album, "Memory Almost Full," is a suite of deeply personal songs. Photograph by Chris Floyd.



as a "party piece" in the early sixties. He showed how one of the chords had become the opening notes to "Blackbird." He played a snatch of that song, then stopped abruptly. "O.K., back to work!" he said. "That's enough fun. It'll end in tears."

He asked Smith to play through the studio speakers a guitar phrase from the beginning of a movement called "Farmboy"—an ascending run of five notes that McCartney had recorded sometime earlier. Smith played the phrase. "O.K., stop there," McCartney said. He turned to Bonell and explained that he wanted the figure to include "more notes."

Bonell performed the phrase, adding more notes.

McCartney grunted. "I'm trying to get, like, twice the amount of notes in," he said. "So instead of—" he played an arpeggio—"it should be. . . . " He tried to play the sounds he heard in his mind, but stumbled.

Bonell's fingers flew over the frets.

"Yeah," McCartney said, still not hearing it. "Um, there's a note on the way, a passing note."

Bonell played a fancier run up the scale.

"Yeah," McCartney said, dubiously. He attempted to sing the phrase but couldn't capture it. "It just needs two notes for every one," he persisted.

Bonell tried again.

"Yeah, that's probably it," McCartney said. But he didn't sound sure. He suggested that they move on to another passage. They worked this way for almost an hour.

At 4:30 P.M., McCartney announced that the session was over. It was Friday, and Hammel was supposed to drive McCartney to Mills's house in Brighton, to pick up Bea, the couple's three-year-old daughter. McCartney, who has joint custody, never allows his work to interfere with his time with Bea. Last February, Steve Jobs invited him to play three songs at the public unveiling of Apple's new iPhone. McCartney agreed, but reneged when he learned that the launch coincided with Bea's nursery-school vacation.

McCartney's father, Jim, was a cotton salesman and jazz trumpeter in Liverpool, who played local gigs with his group, Jim Mac's Jazz Band, in the twenties. McCartney's mother, Mary, a midwife, was the main breadwinner. The family moved frequently around Liverpool when McCartney was a boy, and was always strapped for cash, but McCartney recalls a happy childhood, in which music had a significant role. His father played jazz standards on the piano and took him to brass-band concerts. In his teens, McCartney started listening to local skiffle groups, and fell in love with Elvis and Little Richard. When he was fourteen, he traded a trumpet his father had given him for a guitar. That year, his mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. She underwent surgery and died soon after. Around that time, McCartney wrote his first song, "I Lost My Little Girl," a love ballad. "I didn't think I was writing anything to do with my mum," he said. "But from this perspective I possibly was." He explained, "She died when I was fourteen, so you get that terrible thing of not being able to picture her face, after a few years. It's sort of a horrific feeling of slipping away."

McCartney's father, in an effort to get Paul and his younger brother, Michael, to go to bed on time, had rigged up a radio receiver and earphones in their room. Paul fell asleep each night listening to music and radio plays, and he has said that this "did incredible things to your imagination." He told me that some of the sonic games on "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" derived from his memories of listening to the radio. McCartney conceived the idea of opening the album with the sound of a crowd laughing when he recalled the excitement and mystery of hearing laughter from an unseen studio audience in a radio show. "You didn't know what made them laugh. Did someone's pants fall down? What was it? That's what we were trying to re-create. Putting in those things that got your imagination going."

WISE

I am in awe
of what I feel about you
if I let myself feel.

I have no argument with it.
I want to go on with this

marvel of not having
to disguise a thing:
I've gotten wise,

they used to say
in my parents' generation
in another style,

as *wise* moved along over time
getting smaller and smaller,
farther outside, and outsized.

Like the music I used to run from the room from
as soon as it started to wail from the hi-fi

before I was ever in love,
eager for the outside opinion.
Desires change over time,

and myself, I am in awe,
and disguise one thing.

—*Elizabeth Macklin*

On July 6, 1957, when McCartney was fifteen, his friend Ivan Vaughan persuaded him to attend the Woolton Parish Church fête, across town in Liverpool, to watch a skiffle band led by a student from Quarry Bank High School. McCartney was riveted by the band's sixteen-year-old leader, John Lennon, who was playing banjo chords on an incorrectly tuned guitar and making up lyrics as he went along. After the show, McCartney joined the musicians backstage, sat down at the piano, and began to show off. He played a song by Jerry Lee Lewis, then, borrowing a guitar, played Eddie Cochran's "Twenty Flight Rock." A few days later, McCartney learned through a mutual friend that Lennon wanted him to join his band. Lennon later admitted to the Beatles' early biographer Hunter Davies that he had struggled with the decision. "I'd been kingpin up to then," he said. "Now, I thought, if I take him on, what will happen?"

McCartney taught Lennon how to tune a guitar and form proper chords, and after playing his first gig with the Quarry Men—a club dance—revealed that he had written a few songs. He played "I Lost My Little Girl" for Lennon, who responded by writing a song of his own. The two began skipping school, hanging out at McCartney's house, and writing songs together. "If he did something good, I'd want to do something better," McCartney said. "If I did something good, he'd want to do something better. It's just the way we worked." Later, he added, "None of us could read or write music, so it was all intuitive. That's what was so exciting about it. You heard a chord and 'What was that? What happened?' 'I don't know.' 'Do it again!' "

As aspiring songwriters who also wanted to perform their work, Lennon and McCartney had no role models; at the time, most rock musicians sang songs written by professional writers. Buddy Holly was an exception. "We loved him," McCartney said. "I remember hearing 'That'll Be the Day' and the lyric 'That'll be the day-hey-hey when I die.' " He paused. "*Die*? In a pop song? That was *dark*, man. We loved that." McCartney also admired older songwriters—Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hammerstein, George Gershwin—and was delighted to learn that Lennon shared his enthusiasm. "One of John's favorite songs was called 'Little White Lies' "—written by Walter Donaldson, in 1930—"and that always surprised me, when I met him. I went, 'Ahh, wow.' That was something we had in common." They strove to incorporate the structural complexities, lyrical sophistication, and elastic chord changes of those classic songs into their rock-and-roll songwriting.

In the first year of their friendship, McCartney and Lennon wrote a hundred songs, two of which, "Love Me Do" and "The One After 909," eventually made it onto Beatles albums. Meanwhile, McCartney was still attending grammar school, at the Liverpool Institute. On his daily bus ride, he had become aware of a schoolmate, almost a year his junior, who got on one stop after him. The boy wore rock-and-roll clothing and had an Elvis pompadour, which aroused McCartney's interest. "But, being an older guy, you didn't strike up a conversation," he said. One day, the boy sat next to McCartney and introduced himself. His name was George Harrison, and he played the guitar. McCartney and Harrison got together to jam, and in 1958, at McCartney's urging, Lennon invited the fourteen-year-old Harrison to join the band.

The Quarry Men was no longer a high-school band singing improvised lyrics but had become a well-rehearsed group with an accomplished lead guitarist, original songs, and professional ambitions. This transformation was largely the result of McCartney's drive and focus, despite Lennon's title as leader. When I pointed this out to McCartney, he shrugged. "I've got a lot to answer for," he said.

In the summer of 1958, Lennon's mother, Julia, was killed by a car driven by an off-duty police officer, and Lennon became, like McCartney, a motherless teenager. "That was a big bond for us," McCartney told me. But the friendship was not highly demonstrative. "We were Northern boys, and you didn't talk about your feelings. You didn't sit around complimenting each other," McCartney said. "So when he said something, you knew he meant it. I remember one time when we'd been skiing all day and we were back at the hotel room, and John and I were paired up in a room, and George and Ringo were in another, and we were listening to a cassette tape of 'Here, There and Everywhere'—one that I wrote." He paused. "Which album is that on? Is that 'Revolver'? Anyway, I remember John was taking off his ski boots and he said, 'That's a good one, there.' And I just felt great. That was true praise."

In 1960, after playing at second-tier venues around Liverpool and doing a short tour in Scotland, the group (now calling itself the Beatles, a play on Buddy Holly's backup band, the Crickets) was booked for several performances in Hamburg, Germany. With Pete Best on drums and Stuart Sutcliffe on bass, they played marathon gigs of several hours each, fortifying themselves with beer and amphetamines. The following year, they returned to Hamburg, where they began wearing their hair combed forward, in a style devised by Astrid Kirchherr, a German art student who was Sutcliffe's girlfriend. In Liverpool, the Beatles had become the main attraction at the Cavern Club, where, in late 1961, Brian Epstein, the manager of a local record store, saw them play. He became their manager, and, on June 6, 1962, the Beatles secured a record deal at E.M.I. Four months later, with Ringo Starr on drums, they released their first single, "Love Me Do." It reached No. 17 on the British charts. In January, 1963, they released their second single, "Please Please Me," which went to No. 1, and the following February the Beatles came to America to play the "Ed Sullivan Show."

McCartney owns a house in London, on a secluded street in St. John's Wood, a short walk from the E.M.I. recording studios, on Abbey Road. (He divides his time between London and Sussex.) He bought the house in 1964, and wrote many of the Beatles' most famous songs there, with Lennon and on his own. The house, an unpretentious, three-story Edwardian, is shielded from the street by a ten-foot brick wall and an automatic safety gate, which McCartney operates by remote control. McCartney arrived at the house at midday on Tuesday, after spending the weekend and Monday, a bank holiday, with Bea. Later that afternoon, he was to meet his eldest daughter, Mary, a photographer, who planned to take pictures of him that would be used to promote the new album. (McCartney has two other children by Linda—Stella, a fashion designer, and James, a musician—and he is the adoptive father of Heather, Linda’s daughter from a previous marriage, who is a potter.)

McCartney was dressed in a gray-brown suit, the knot of his tie pulled down, his shirt collar open. He unlocked the front door and showed me into a wide entry hall, which was lined with framed photographs, many of them taken by McCartney himself, including one of a road worker in India wearing a psychedelic-looking costume, and spattered with mud. There was a large bouquet of flowers in a vase on a table, and, in the kitchen nearby, McCartney’s flower arranger was trimming the stems of still more blooms. (The bouquets are changed each week.) His housekeeper, Maria, was at the stove. McCartney greeted them cheerfully and led me to a large living room at the back of the house. The immaculate room contained a big square wooden coffee table, a couch, several armchairs, and a bookcase, and the walls were hung with modern art: a canvas by Philip Guston, another de Kooning, and an expressionistic oil painting of a steer, by McCartney himself; he pointed out, with pride, the sinuous freehand line with which he had drawn the animal’s horns. A pair of French doors at one end of the room opened onto a sunlit garden. A winding central path led to a small geodesic dome, which McCartney had built in the sixties to use for meditation.

In a corner of the room was a well-polished upright piano with yellowed ivory keys. “This was my dad’s piano,” McCartney said. “More amazingly, it was bought from Brian Epstein’s father—Harry Epstein—when none of us had ever heard of the Epstein family. But they had a shop in Liverpool that sold musical instruments. It was called North End Music Stores—NEMS—which is what Brian’s company was. We, the Beatles, were signed to NEMS enterprises. My dad bought this when I was a boy.” McCartney leaned over the keyboard and played a rippling arpeggio. The piano had a warm, old-fashioned tone. He launched into the barrelhouse introduction to “Lady Madonna.” After a couple of bars, he stopped and straightened up. “I had in here, in the sixties, a Steinway that I have in my house in the country now, a baby grand, which I wrote most of the Beatles stuff on,” he said. He added that in this room he and Lennon had worked on the sequence for the medley on the second side of “Abbey Road.”

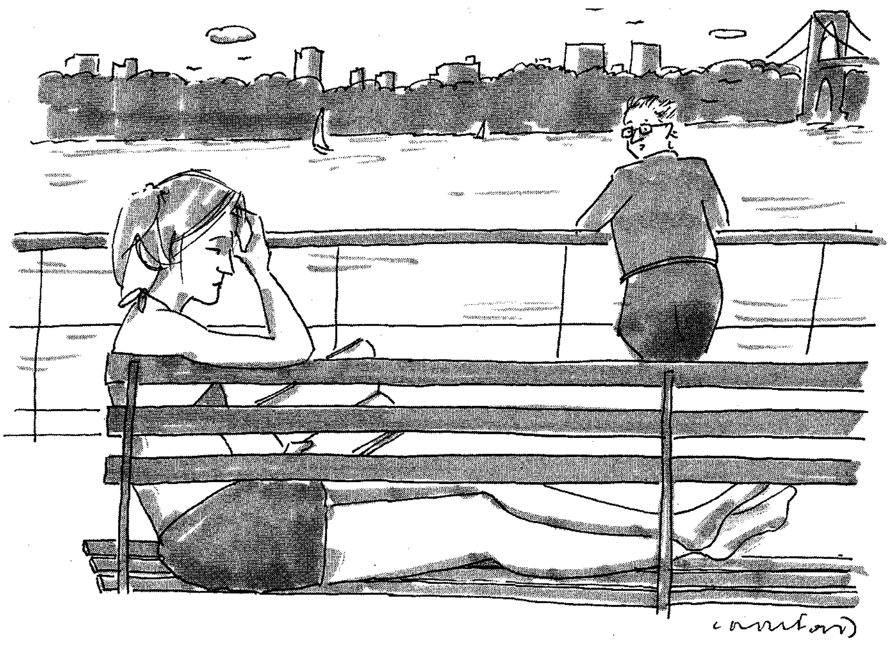
McCartney moved to a set of bookshelves that held two small framed photographs of him and his brother, Michael, as children, posing with their parents. He pulled out a hardcover copy of “Pilgrim’s Progress,” and opened it to the flyleaf. “This is from Auntie Dil,” he said. The book was inscribed “To Paul” and dated 1953. “I didn’t like it at all,” he said, replacing it on the shelf. “I liked that Auntie Dil gave it me. Trying to keep me on the straight and narrow.” He turned and walked toward the kitchen, calling to his housekeeper by crooning, “Maria, I just met a girl called Maria.” He asked her for tea with soy milk, and soon she appeared in the living room, carrying a teapot and cups on a silver tray. “Would you like me to pour?” she asked.

“We’ll pour!” McCartney said, sounding aghast.

When McCartney was about sixteen, he wrote the song “When I’m Sixty-Four” on his father’s piano. “It really is weird,” he said. “You get to sixty-four, you go, ‘Why did I write a song called “When I’m Sixty-Four”?’ ” For years, the song was a bouncy instrumental, without lyrics. “It was like a musical spoof,” he said. “But then what happened, years later—another great thing about John and I having known each other so long and so intimately is he would often say to me, ‘What about that tune, that thing you always used to play on the piano? You should do something with that.’ ” McCartney wrote the lyrics in his twenties, and recorded the song for the “Sgt. Pepper” album. “It was the right time to write the lyric,” he said. “It’s a more sophisticated lyric than I would have written at sixteen, that’s for sure. It’s a little tongue-in-cheek, which helps. ‘Stating point of view.’ ‘Fill in a form.’ It’s quite cool. It’s quite an economical lyric. I heard it recently.” He laughed. “Obviously! Heard it a lot recently—I wonder why?

“But another one John said to me was ‘Michelle,’ ” McCartney went on, referring to the ballad from “Rubber Soul,”

which contains several lines in French. The song’s melody dates to the Beatles’ first days together, when Lennon was attending the Liverpool College of Art, and would invite McCartney and Harrison to parties with his classmates. “We used to go in black turtleneck sweaters and try to look enigmatic and older,” McCartney said. “All the girls were older. And one of the things I used to do was sit in the corner with a guitar and try to look interesting and French.” He would play the chords that would eventually become “Michelle,” and mutter pseudo-French phrases. “So John said, years later, ‘What about that “French” song you used to do? That’s got a good tune.’ ” His friend Ivan Vaughan was married to a woman who studied French. “So I’d go round her house and say, ‘Gimme some clues. I’ve got this idea for “Michelle.” What rhymes with that?’ She’d go, ‘*Belle*,’ and I’d go, ‘O.K., wait a minute: *ma belle.* Oh yeah, good.’ ”



“Need a hand with that Chekhov, pretty lady?”

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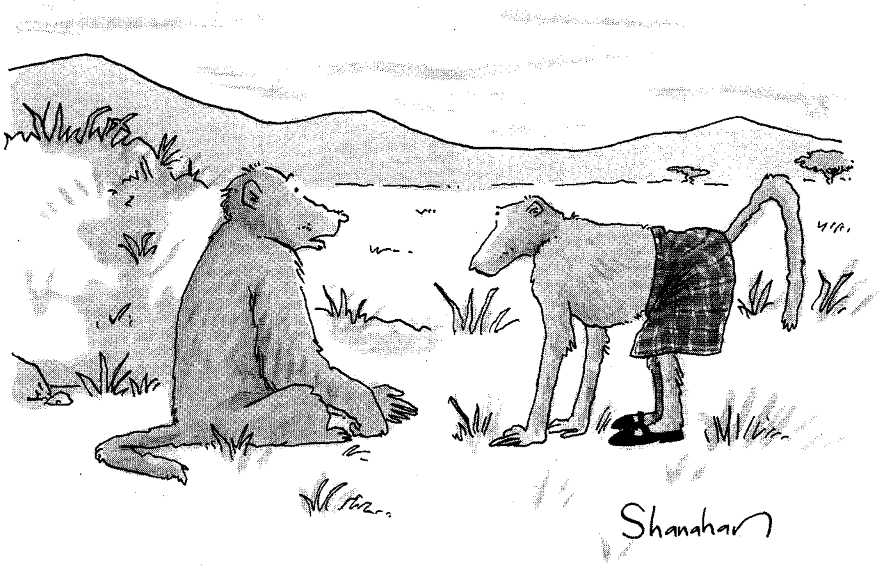
As the Beatles matured, Lennon and McCartney collaborated less directly on songs, but they continued to trade ideas. McCartney began writing “Paperback Writer” in 1965, after reading in the *Daily Mail* about an aspiring author—possibly Martin Amis, he said. He imagined the song as a would-be author’s pleading letter to a publisher. One day, he arrived at Lennon’s house, in the London suburb of Weybridge. “I said, ‘Look, I’ve got an idea here, it’s a letter.’ He said, ‘Yeah, what?’ I said, ‘Something like this: “Dear Sir or Madam” ’—and I virtually read out this letter to him. And he said, ‘Good, that’s it.’ I said, ‘Well, we could—’ And he said, ‘No, that’s it. Done it!’ That’s a good collaborator.”

The melody to “Yesterday,” also from 1965, came to McCartney in a dream. He brought it to Lennon, unfinished, with nonsense lyrics as a place holder: “Scrambled eggs, oh my, baby, how I love your legs.” The song became a standing joke between them for days while they tried to find words to fit the melody. McCartney finally wrote the lyrics during a three-hour car trip from Lisbon to the south of Portugal which he took with his girlfriend at the time, Jane Asher. “The words are quite mature for a kid,” McCartney said. “Rather kind of dark. Yet it doesn’t communicate itself as too dark somehow. But again I wonder, psychologically, looking at that now, I sort of think of the words ‘Why she had to go, I don’t know, she wouldn’t say. I said something wrong, now I long for yesterday.’ Was that harking back to my mum?”

McCartney was no less accomplished as a bass player than he was as a songwriter, though he took up the instrument only after the Beatles’ original bassist, Stuart Sutcliffe, quit the band, in 1961. “I thought, O.K., I’m lumbered with it, let’s think of something to do here,” McCartney told me. “And James Jamerson, the Motown bass player, provided the answer. His bass lines were so seriously good.” However, McCartney developed a unique style, using his gift for melody to compose counterpoint bass lines that added to the Beatles’ songs a movement and depth still unequalled in popular music. Lennon told an interviewer in 1980, “Paul was one of the most innovative bass players who ever played bass.” McCartney’s other notable talent was his singing voice, which he could alter to fit whatever style of song he was playing: throwing his voice into an ecstatic high register, like a young Elvis Presley, on a song like “Can’t Buy Me Love,” or belting like Little Richard on “I’m Down.” “I’m very lucky with my voice,” McCartney said. “I have no idea how it happens.”

Between 1963 and the end of 1965, the Beatles wrote and recorded six albums: “Please Please Me,” “With the Beatles,” “A Hard Day’s Night,” “Beatles for Sale,” “Help!,” and “Rubber Soul.” They also toured regularly, and starred in two movies, “A Hard Day’s Night” and “Help!” This productivity was possible, in part, because of the system then in place for making records. “In the very early days, we were just told by the grownups—George Martin and the producers—what they wanted,” McCartney said. “They’d say, ‘We need so many songs, you come in at ten o’clock, you’ve got a half hour to have a cup of tea and tune up, we’ll start recording at ten-thirty, you’ll go to one-thirty. You’ve then got an hour break until two-thirty, then we’ll record until five-thirty. In that morning section, we’ll do two songs, and in the afternoon two more.’ It was fascinating. Often, George and Ringo hadn’t even heard the song. John and I would say, ‘Goes like this’ ”—he sings the chorus to Lennon’s song “Girl,” from “Rubber Soul,” in which Lennon intersperses each yearning sigh of the word “girl” with a long, hissing inhale. “And John would say, ‘I want a breathing thing. I want to breathe in.’ All the ideas would spill out there and then. Obviously George and Ringo were so brilliant that they would just go, ‘Yeah, yeah.’ They wouldn’t go, ‘What do you mean?’ None of that. Ringo would stand there with his sticks, do a couple of beats. We’d just go to our things and play.

“Because of that way of working,” he



"And in the event of an actual leopard attack the schoolgirl fetish would do exactly what?"

• •

continued, "you knocked off at five-thirty, so now you had time for an evening. Very civilized. I was living in London, so I'd go to the National to see Colin Blakely in 'Juno and the Paycock,' go to the movies, 'Far from the Madding Crowd,' go to an exhibition, a reception. All these great things. So the next morning, when you're having your cup of tea before recording, you'd be talking about that, and you'd be informed by it."

His new record includes a song called "That Was Me," an upbeat rock tune on which he demonstrates that his voice is still capable of startling clarity and range. The song contains a verse about his Beatle days: "That was me / Sweating cobwebs / Under contract / In the cellar / On TV / That was me!" I mentioned that the song seems to express amazement at the life he has led.

"That's exactly it, and I am amazed," he said. "How could I not be? Unless I just totally blocked it off. There were four people in the Beatles, and I was one of them. There were two people in the Lennon-McCartney songwriting team, and I was one of them. I mean, right there, that's enough for anyone's life. And there was one guy who wrote 'Yesterday,' and I was him. One guy who wrote 'Let It Be,' 'Fool on the Hill,' 'Lady Madonna'—and I was him, too. All of these things would be enough for anyone's life. So to be involved in all of them is pretty surprising. And you have to pinch yourself. That's what that song is about."

At the same time, McCartney said, the Beatles' legacy can be a burden. "You're always doing stuff in the shadow of something, and obviously if you've been in the Beatles you're in a big shadow," he said. "So that now I can write a song and I must admit that there is an element of naturally dismissing it. Thinking, It's O.K." Nevertheless, he added, there are a few songs on his new album, such as "The End of the End," which he can listen to and say, "Shit, that's really good." In particular, he said, he likes the ingeniously circular lines:

> On the day that I die
> I'd like jokes to be told
> And stories of old
> To be rolled out like carpets
> That children have played on
> And laid on while listening
> To stories of old.

"But no," he went on. "There is this sort of inevitable perception that takes time to wash off. It's like a layer of dust that naturally attaches itself to whatever you do. Dylan said it well when he was asked if he'd ever write another song like 'Tambourine Man,' and he said, 'I couldn't—that was then.' I think there is a huge truth in that. You couldn't. I'm not going to be as interested, perhaps, in the subject of a young paperback writer now as I was then, because I was a young paperback writer, sort of. My age group was. So 'Paperback Writer' in itself wouldn't happen now."

My last meeting with McCartney took place in Regent's Park, near his London home. He had suggested that we meet at a small café beside a boat pond on the park's western edge. I arrived a few minutes early. The sky was overcast and threatening rain, and the park was deserted. In the distance, I saw McCartney enter the park, wearing a chocolate-colored suit and a blue shirt. He stopped and gazed at an empty children's playground. Then he saw me, waved, and joined me at a table on the patio of the café. This seemed an appropriate setting to discuss the Beatles' breakup, which began after the recording of "The Beatles" (known as "The White Album"), in 1968, when Lennon had fallen in love with Yoko Ono, and conflicts over business decisions were dividing the group. In 1969, Lennon persuaded George Harrison and Ringo Starr that the band should hire Allen Klein, an abrasive, tough-talking American, as its manager. (Brian Epstein had died two years earlier.) McCartney wanted to hire his father-in-law, Lee Eastman, a lawyer. The other Beatles felt that this arrangement would give McCartney an unfair advantage, and accused him of trying to exert too much control over the band. The three other Beatles signed with Klein, but McCartney held out. In May, 1969, Klein renegotiated the band's contract with E.M.I. The new agreement called for the group to produce two new albums a year until 1976, at an unprecedented royalty rate (up from thirty-nine cents per LP sold to fifty-eight cents, until 1972, after which it would increase to seventy-two cents).

In January, 1969, the group had begun filming the movie "Let It Be," which was intended to show the Beatles happily recording a new album. Instead, it documented the group's dissolution, portraying Harrison as surly and bitter, Starr as morose and listless, and Lennon as withdrawn from everyone except Ono, who was always at his side. McCartney is shown repeatedly trying, and failing, to inspire camaraderie and excitement in his bandmates. Ono's presence at every session was clearly an obstacle.

I suggested to McCartney that it's difficult to know whom to blame for

Ono's presence at the sessions—Lennon, who brought her along, or Ono, who stayed when she was obviously unwelcome. "Let's not blame either of them," he said. "It's a long time ago and it's water under the bridge. They were . . . in love. And that excuses an awful lot of things." Lennon, it has since been reported, was also using heroin at the time, which didn't help communication between him and McCartney. I asked McCartney how significant Lennon's drug habit was. "I actually don't know," he said. "John and I never talked about it." He added that he can't bear to watch "Let It Be."

In late 1969, when the differences among the Beatles proved insoluble, the band broke up (the split was made public a few months later), and McCartney suffered what he has described as a breakdown. "Withdrawal from the band," he told me. "But it wasn't just that the band had broken up. It was the circumstances under which the band had broken up. I actually had to sue them. There was no other way. I tried for months to find some other way. I tried originally to sue Allen Klein, to get him out of the picture and just sort of tidy up. But he wasn't a party to any of the agreements. And they said the only people you can sue are the other Beatles. I said, 'Well, I can't do that.' So this then plunged me into sort of—not a depression, but a difficult, a very difficult time, where I was going to meetings and it was three against one. And that's not fun. When they're your friends.

"There are people still, to this day, who say, 'He sued his friends,'" he continued. "As if I did it lightly. Like it was a fun thing for me to do."

Suddenly, a young woman was standing nearby. "Sorry to interrupt," she said, "but can I take a picture of my sons with you?" Her two small boys stood some way off. McCartney, unhappy about the intrusion, said politely, "I'd rather not, actually, if you don't mind. I'll shake hands with you. But I don't do photos."

"I want to send to my parents—"

"I know, darling, you and everyone. But I don't do it. That's why. I hope you don't mind. I hope you don't think I'm being big-headed—"

"No!" she said.

"But I think your sons are wonderful."

Eventually the woman went away, and McCartney said, "Everyone's got a camera. Everyone's got a phone, man. It's not just the paparazzi—which I've had two of this morning. And I've had two requests from the public as well, to take a photo with them. And I don't want to take a photo with every single person in the world—especially when I'm having a private moment."

I returned to the subject of the Beatles' breakup. "It really was hellishly tough times and I very nearly went under," he said. "I was suing my friends, I wasn't working, I was drinking in the daytime to try to sort of pretend I was 'partying,' and I wasn't. And Linda was my savior. Linda was absolutely my savior. Strong woman. She just was able to hang in there and help me hang in there." I asked if any songs had come out of this dark period. He thought for a moment, and said, "'Maybe I'm Amazed'"—a power ballad about his need for Linda at a time in his life when, as he sings in the song, "I'm a lonely man who's in the middle of something that he doesn't really understand." The song appeared on his first, extraordinary solo album, "McCartney," which was released in April, 1970, days after the Beatles announced their breakup.

In March, 1971, the British High Court ruled in McCartney's favor in his case against Lennon, Harrison, and Starr, and the Beatles' business affairs were put in receivership, effectively disempowering Klein. "Then it was all finished," McCartney said. "We got rid of Klein. Over the years, our friendship came back. And the guys, one by one, thanked me." By 1972, the other Beatles had grown disenchanted with Klein and did not renew their contracts with him. Klein sued the Beatles for breach of contract, and they countersued. (The cases were eventually settled out of court.)

In the mid-seventies, McCartney and Lennon, after not having seen each other for years, got together in New York, where Lennon had moved. "He was clean and wonderful," McCartney recalled. "I'd meet him when I'd go through New York often—to regain the feeling we had in our early days was a great, full-circle type thing." By the time of Lennon's murder, in December, 1980, they were friends again. "Which is something that I'm eternally grateful for," McCartney said. "That would have been really difficult if we hadn't."

A cold drizzle began. McCartney suggested that we go into the café, which was empty. We sat in a corner. I was curious to know whether he thought of the sixties as a magical time. "I think I remember it in that way," he said, without conviction. "But, like everything, there's the juxtaposition. When I wrote 'Let It Be,' for instance"—a song that begins "When I find myself in times of trouble / Mother Mary comes to me"—"I'd been partying too much. I had a sort of dream where my mum came to me and said, 'It'll be O.K. Let it be.' That's where the song came from. So I obviously wasn't doing too great. It was not just the golden memories."

The mention of his mother—whom he referred to in his conversations with me almost as often as he did to the Beatles—reminded me of something McCartney had said on our first meeting in his office at M.P.L., five days earlier. That day had been sunny and mild, the kind of beautiful spring afternoon in London that had inspired him to write the joyous "Good Day Sunshine," from "Revolver." We had been talking about the many losses he has lately suffered.

"I'm the same as anyone else as far as all that's concerned," he had said. "Losing my mum when I was fourteen was a major tragic event in my life. But, when I think about myself, I am, over all, pretty optimistic, pretty enthusiastic, pretty much into getting on. One of the reasons being, she would want that. I know for certain she would want that. I know Linda would want that. I know John would want that, and George would want that. My dad would want that. They were very, very positive people. And the idea that their deaths would plunge me into some sort of morose depression would bother them. I know that for a fact. So that helps me to not go there." As he spoke, his eyes moved to the large window overlooking Soho Square, where the sunlight flickered in the new leaves. "When the sun is shining, as it is today," he said, "I'm in love." ♦

PERSONAL HISTORY

HOW I SPENT THE WAR

A recruit in the Waffen S.S.

BY GÜNTER GRASS

In 1943, when I was a fifteen-year-old schoolboy in Danzig, I volunteered for active duty. When? Why? Since I do not know the exact date and cannot recall the by then unstable climate of the war, or list its hot spots from the Arctic to the Caucasus, all I can do for now is string together the circumstances that probably triggered and nourished my decision to enlist. No mitigating epithets allowed. What I did cannot be put down to youthful folly. No pressure from above. Nor did I feel the need to assuage a sense of guilt, at, say, doubting the Führer's infallibility, with my zeal to volunteer.

It happened while I was serving in the Luftwaffe auxiliary—a force made up of boys too young to be conscripts, who were deployed to defend Germany in its air war. The service was not voluntary but compulsory then for boys of my age, though we experienced it as a liberation from our school routine and accepted its not very taxing drills. Rabidly pubescent, we considered ourselves the mainstays of the home front. The Kaiserhafen battery became our second home. At first there were attempts to keep school going, but, as classes were too often interrupted by field exercises, the mostly frail, elderly teachers refused to travel the wearisome dirt road to our battery.

We got to use our 88-mm. guns only two or three times, when a few enemy bombers were sighted in our airspace in the beam of the searchlights. Massive raids—the kind that Cologne, Hamburg, Berlin, and the Ruhr Basin cities suffered—we did not experience. No damage worthy of the name, few casualties. We were proud to have shot down a four-engined Lancaster bomber; the "rather charred" crew members were said to have been Canadians. As a rule, however, service in the Luftwaffe auxiliary was dreary, though dreary in a different way from school. We were especially turned off by nightly guard duty and ballistics classes, which dragged on forever in the musty classroom barracks.

We had every other weekend off. We could, as they put it, "go home to Mama." And, each time, my joy at the thought of the visit was tempered by my pain at the thought of our cramped quarters—a two-room flat adjoining the small grocery store that my parents ran, where the only space that I could call my own was a low niche under the sill of the right-hand living-room window.

At home, I kept bumping into things and into the lack of things: a bathroom and a toilet, for instance. All we had at the battery was a common shower room and, beyond it, a common latrine. There we would squat next to one another, shitting into a pit, and that didn't bother me at all. But, at home, the toilet on the landing, shared by four flats, grew more and more distasteful to me: it was always filthy from the neighbors' children, or occupied when you needed it. It stank, and its

Grass, far right, with his family, in 1933, and, opposite right, in 1944, at sixteen, when he was drafted into the Labor Service.

AKADEMIE DER KUNSTE; KARL-HEINZ KALKBRENNER walls were smeared with fingerprints.

The two-room hole. The family trap. Everything there conspired to constrain the weekend visitor. Not even the mother's hand could smooth away the son's distress. True, he was no longer expected to sleep in his parents' bedroom like his sister, but even on the couch made up for him in the living room he remained a witness to the married life that continued unbroken from Saturday to Sunday. That is, I could hear—or thought I could hear—sounds I had heard, muffled as they were, from childhood on, sounds that had lodged in my mind in the form of a monstrous ritual: the anticipatory whispers, the lip-smacking, the creaking bedsprings, the sighing horsehair mattress, the moaning, the groaning, the entire aural repertory of lovemaking, so potent, especially in the dark. I had a clear picture of all the variations on marital coupling, and in my cinematic version of the act the mother was always the victim: she yielded, she gave the go-ahead, she held out to the point of exhaustion.

The hatred of a mother's boy for his father, the subliminal battleground that determined the course of Greek tragedies and has been so eloquently updated by Dr. Freud and his disciples, was thus, if not the primary cause, then at least one of the factors in my push to leave home.

I racked my brain for flight routes. They all ran in one direction: the front, or one of the many fronts, as quickly as possible.

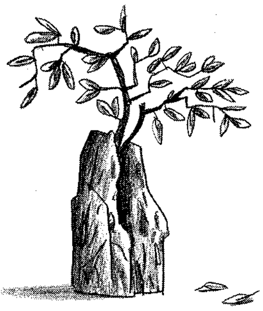
I tried to pick a quarrel with my father. It wasn't easy. It would have taken massive recriminations, and, peace-loving family man that he was, he was quick to give in. Anything to maintain harmony. The progenitor had a constant wish for the offspring on his lips: "I want your life to be better. . . . You will have a better life than ours." Try as I might to turn him into a bugbear, he was not made for the role.

Yet the suddenly unbearable two-room flat and four-family toilet on the half-landing could not have been the sole cause of my urge to enlist. My schoolmates had grown up in five-room flats with their own bathrooms, supplied with rolls of toilet paper instead of the newsprint we tore into squares. Some of them even lived in fancy private houses and had rooms of their own, yet they, too, yearned to get away, to go to the front. Like me, they wanted to face danger without fear, to sink ship after ship, knock out tank after tank, or fly through the skies in the latest-model Messerschmitts, picking off enemy bombers.

After Stalingrad, however, the situation at the front went downhill. Anyone who, like my Uncle Friedel, was tracking it with colored thumbtacks on specially enlarged, cardboard-backed maps had trouble keeping up with developments in the East and in North Africa. At best, he could register the successes of our ally Japan at sea and in Burma, though our submarines occasionally padded the bulletins with the number and register tonnage of ships they had sunk. In the Atlantic and up near the Arctic, they'd attack convoys in packs.

No, it wasn't the newspapers that fed my hero worship but the newsreels: I was a pushover for the prettified black-and-white "truth" they served up. Not one newsreel failed to show the submarines returning home victorious, and since I, when home on leave, would lie awake for hours on the living-room couch after seeing them on the screen, I had plenty of opportunity to picture myself as a ship's mate during a stormy tower watch, swathed in oilskins, covered with spray, spyglass trained on the dancing horizon. . . .

It must have been possible for a Luftwaffe auxiliary to trade a weekend leave for a Wednesday or Thursday off. In any case, one thing is clear: after one long day's march, I took the tram from Heubude to the Central Station, and from there the train via Langfuhr and Zoppot to Gotenhafen, where Navy recruits were trained to handle submarines. It took all of an hour to reach the goal of my dreams of heroism. I found the recruitment office in a low, Polish-period building where, behind a row of doors with signs, bureaucratic rigmarole was processed, passed on, filed. After signing in, I was told to wait for my name to be called. There were two or three older boys ahead of me. I did not have much to say to them.



The sergeant and the seaman first class I spoke to rejected me out of hand: I was too young; my age group hadn't come up yet; it would soon enough; no reason for excessive haste.

They were smoking and drinking coffee with milk out of big, bulbous cups. One of these—from my perspective—elderly gentlemen (the sergeant?) was sharpening a supply of pencils while I spoke. Or did I pick up this dramatic detail from some movie or other?

I must have stood my ground even as I was told that there was no need for submarine volunteers at present: they had stopped accepting applications. And then they reminded me that the war was not being fought entirely underwater, and said that they would make a note of my name and pass it on to other branches of the military. Provisions were being made for new panzer divisions. "Patience, young man, patience. We'll come and get you soon enough."

As I summon forth the boy I was then, making him stand at attention in laced-up, spit-shined shoes and striped socks topped by naked knees, I seem to hear those two men in uniform laughing sardonically, thinking perhaps of what the boy still in shorts has in store: the sergeant's left sleeve was empty.

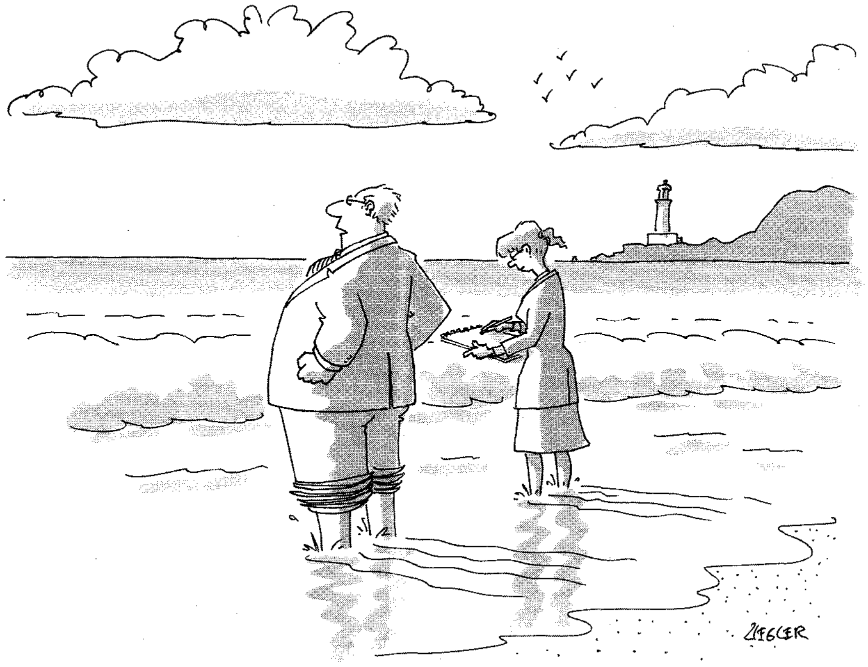
Time passed. Things at home ran their wartime course. I managed to keep the animosity that I felt toward my father within bounds for the length of my weekend leaves. I presumably enjoyed disdaining him: first, because he existed; next, because he would stand or sit in the living room in a suit and tie and felt slippers; next, because he was forever mixing pastry dough in the same stoneware bowl while wearing the same apron; next, because he was always the one who carefully tore the newspapers into toilet paper; and, finally, because, having been declared "exempt from military service," he would never go to the front and therefore never get out of my hair. But my father did give me a Kienzle wristwatch for my birthday.

Mother's take on the general situation boiled down to the following: "I have my doubts." Though I once heard her say, "Too bad Hess is gone. I liked him better than our Führer." She was also known to come out with "I can't understand why they've got it in for the Jews. We used to have a haberdashery sales rep by the name of Zuckermann. As nice as could be, and always gave a discount."

All winter long, the front moved closer to home. The Wehrmacht's high command tried to tone down the retreat by dubbing it a front-straightening operation. Victory bulletins virtually ceased, and more and more bombardment victims were seeking refuge in our city and its environs. The urge to break away, to flee to any front that would have me, had lost its force. My desire was moving in another direction: I read Eichendorff and Lenau at their most romantic, pored over Kleist's "Kohlhaas" and Hölderlin's "Hyperion," and stood guard by the ack-ack guns, lost in thought, my eyes wandering over the frozen sea.

This leisurely pace could have gone on all spring, which had finally come, and into the summer, but, shortly after I was called in for the physical given to all potential recruits, in the building of the local military command, I received official notification that I had been inducted into the Reichsarbeitsdienst, the Labor Service, another auxiliary force, intended to provide support for the war in civilian areas. I was not the only one who received that piece of certified mail. It all went like clockwork, according to age group. Length of service: three months. I was to report in late April or early May.

My knowledge of geography had been expanding again with reports of front movements in the east (Kiev evacuated), of battles for islands in the Pacific between the Japanese and the Americans, of developments in southern Europe. After our Italian allies broke with us, a move we saw as base treason, and our parachutists liberated Il Duce from his hideout in the Abruzzi Apennines—Skorzeny was the latest hero's name—came the battle for the ruins of Monte Cassino Abbey. The British and the Americans had landed on the coast just south of Rome and were extending a beachhead that was still under fire when I had to give up my chic Luftwaffe auxiliary uniform for the less than flattering Labor Service garb. Shit-brown, it made us look shitty, we would say. The most ludicrous part of it was the headgear, a felt hat that looked like a big bump with a crease down the middle and seemed to have been made only to be torn off. We dubbed it "ass with a handle."



"Make a note, Ellen—one Speedo, size 54."

From the outset, I had what was known in the Labor Service as a cushy job: I was good at drawing and had a way with colors, and was therefore considered privileged. The walls of the canteen in our stone mess hall were to be adorned with pictures inspired by the juniper bushes, the water hole complete with reflected clouds, and the birches of the half-flat, half-hilly heath. Desired but not essential: a frolicking water nymph.

After the usual morning drill—rifle practice, first with a spade, then with a 98 carbine—I was released to make sketches from nature: all afternoon I could absent myself from the camp with my watercolors, water bottle, and drawing pad. Beautiful clouds, shiny black ponds, birches in front of or behind gigantic erratic boulders made their way onto the paper in saturated colors. I soon had a pile of sketches to paint in distemper on the canteen's white walls.

Day after day in the morning drill, we went through a ceremony conducted by the corporal in charge of weapons, a man who looked serious on principle. He handed them out, we grabbed them. It goes without saying: every member of the Labor Service was to feel honored by the touch of the wood and metal, the butt and barrel of the carbine in his hands.

And we boys did, in fact, inflate ourselves to men when we stood at attention with our guns by our sides or presented them or marched with them on our shoulders. You might say that we took the expression "A soldier's gun is a soldier's bride" literally. We thought of ourselves as engaged, if not quite married, to the 98 carbine.

Though I make a point of using "we" here, there was an exception to that rank-and-file, somewhat facile plural. This exception was a lanky boy who was so blond and blue-eyed, and whose profile revealed a skull so elongated that the likes of him could be found only in propaganda promoting the Nordic race. Chin, mouth, nose, forehead—each was the epitome of "racial purity." He was untainted: no trace of a wart on neck or temple. He neither lisped nor stuttered when ordered to report. No one could beat him in long-distance running; no one could match his daring when leaping over musty ditches or his agility when clambering over a wall. He could do fifty knee bends without getting tired. There was nothing, no flaw, to sully the picture. But what made him an exception was that he—his name eludes my memory—was an insubordinate: he refused to take part in rifle drill; worse still, he refused to take butt or barrel in hand; and, worst of all, when our dead-earnest drill instructor pressed the carbine on him, he would drop it. Which made him or his fingers criminal.

With the spade, a basic utensil for everyone in the Labor Service, he did all that he was ordered to do. He would also have received top marks in camaraderie. He was the friendly, good-natured type, always ready to help, and he never complained. Upon request, he would give his comrades' boots such a regulation shine that they would be a feast for sore eyes, even the eyes of the strictest N.C.O. during roll call. He had no trouble with brushes or dustcloths; it was only the firearm he refused to wield.

Every possible sort of punitive labor was imposed upon him, but nothing helped. He would work conscientiously for hours without a peep, emptying the latrine with a worm-infested bucket on a long stick—a punishment known as "honey-slinging" in soldiers' slang—only to appear, freshly showered, at rifle drill shortly thereafter and refuse to wield the weapon once again. I can see it falling to the ground as if in slow motion.

At first we merely asked him questions and tried to talk him out of it. We actually liked the fellow, this oddball, this knucklehead: "Take it! Just hold it!" But when they took to punishing us on his account and tormented us in the hot sun until we collapsed, we all began to hate him. I, too, worked up my ire against him. We were expected to give him a hard time, and so we did. He had put us under pressure; we would return the favor. He was beaten in his barracks by the very boys whose boots he had polished mirror-bright. All against one. Through the boards that divided room from room, I could hear his whimper, the snap of the leather belt, the loud counting. These sounds are ingrained in my memory. But neither the hazing nor the beatings, nor anything else, could force him to carry arms.

Morning after morning, when we gathered for roll call and the drill instructor started passing out the weapons, the incorrigible insubordinate would let the one meant for him fall to the ground like the proverbial hot potato and immediately return to his ramrod position, hands pressed to trouser seams, eyes fixed on a distant point.

I cannot count the number of times he repeated his mantra, a catchphrase that has never left me: "We don't do that." He stuck to the plural. In a voice neither loud nor soft, he pronounced what he and his refused to do. Four words fusing into one: Wedontdothat.

When he was asked what he meant, he repeated the indefinite "that" and refused to call the object he would not take in his hands by its name.

His behavior transformed us. From day to day, what had seemed solid crumbled. Our hatred was mixed first with amazement, then with admiration expressed in questions like "How can that idiot keep it up?" "What makes him so hard-nosed?" "How come he doesn't report sick? He's been pale as a ghost lately."

Then we let him be. No more beatings on the bare behind. The insubordinate stood above us, as if on a pedestal.

In the end, this morning ritual was cut off by his arrest. "Off to the cooler with him!" came the command.

From then on, discipline and order reigned. Every once in a while, the "convict" came up in our conversations. Someone—was it the drill instructor or one of us?—would say, "He must be a Jehovah's Witness." Or, "He's a Bible nut. No doubt about it." But the blond, blue-eyed boy with the racially pure profile had never referred to the Bible or Jehovah or any other Almighty; he had said simply, "Wedontdothat."

One day his locker was cleared out: private things, including religious pamphlets. Then he was gone—"transferred," it was called. We did not ask where to. I did not ask. But we all knew. He had not been discharged as unfit for service; no, we whispered, "he has long been ripe for the concentration camp."

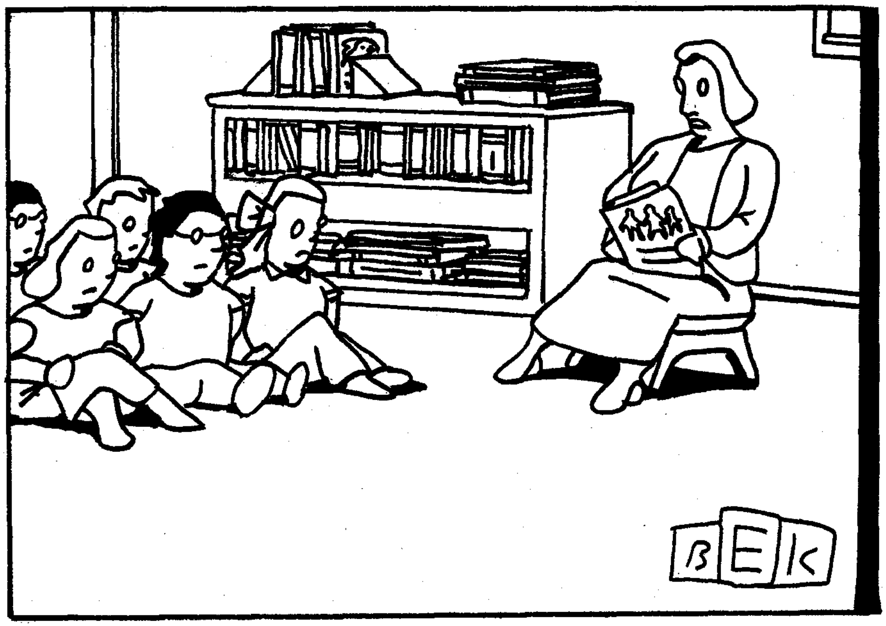
And since we knew of the camp, Stutthof, only by hearsay, we thought Wedontdothat—which was what we called him in secret—was in good hands. "They'll bring old Wedontdothat down a peg or two."

Was it all as simple as that?

Did no one shed a tear?

Did everything go on as it had before?

I must say that I was, if not glad, then at least relieved when the boy disappeared. The storm of doubts about everything in which I'd had rock-solid faith died down, and the resulting calm in my head prevented any further thought from taking wing: mindlessness had filled the space. I was pleased with



"Tommy, you sang along very nicely, but you didn't knock it out of the park."

myself and sated. A self-portrait from that period would have shown me well nourished.

When the bulletin of the Wehrmacht high command, which was tacked up daily on the notice board, announced the landing of the British and American forces on the Atlantic coast, the battle for the Atlantic Wall pushed everything that had preceded it into the background.

Increased vigilance was the order of the day. One of our duties was to fortify the camp: we dug trenches, set up mined wire barriers. We also had to install a complex alarm system, though nothing alarming ever happened, except that one Sunday we were ordered out onto the parade ground in full force, all two hundred and fifty of us, in our shit-brown garb plus ass-with-handle headgear on our closely cropped hair.

In the middle of the square, right next to the flagpole, a Reich Labor Service leader, who had arrived out of nowhere with a tightly knit retinue, was reeling off clipped pronouncements about shame and craven betrayal; that is, about the base and insidious plot on the part of a coterie of well-born officers—unsuccessful, thank heaven—to assassinate our dearly beloved Führer, and about merciless revenge, the "extermination of this vile clique." And on and on about the Führer, who—"It was truly a miracle!"—had survived.

A shiver ran through us. Something akin to piety sent the sweat seeping out of our pores. The Führer saved! The heavens were once more, or still, on our side.

We sang both our national anthems. We shouted *Sieg heil!* three times. We were irate, we were incensed at the still nameless traitors.

We were dismissed from the Labor Service soon after the assassination attempt, our term served. Back in mufti, I was ashamed of my naked knees, my forever sagging kneesocks: I was beyond all that now, no longer a schoolboy.

It took less than two months for my induction letter to arrive, black and white on the kitchen table, signed, dated, and stamped. In September, 1944, my train pulled out of Danzig Central Station, headed for Berlin.

Mother had refused to accompany son to the station. She was smaller than I was, and when she hugged me in the living room she seemed to dissolve into tears between the piano and the grandfather clock. "All I ask is that you come back in one piece," she said.

Father accompanied me. We didn't say a word to each other on the tram. Then he had to buy a platform ticket. His velvet hat gave him a soigné, bourgeois look: a man in his mid-forties who had managed to stay a civilian and stay alive.

He insisted on carrying my cardboard suitcase. The man I had pushed away the moment I started growing, the man who, though he was my father, I had never got close to except when we quarrelled; this vivacious, easygoing, easily tempted man with a mania for good posture and, as he put it, "nice, neat handwriting," who loved me after his fashion, the eternal husband; this man stood next to me as the train pulled in through a cloud of steam.

I didn't cry; he did. He hugged me; I hugged him back. Or did we only do the manly handshake thing? Were we provident, even stinting, with our words—"Take care, my boy," "See you, Papa"?

All I remember seeing clearly was the city with its towers against the evening sky in the distance. I also think I heard the bells of nearby St. Catherine's: "Be ever true and forthright till to the grave thou comest."

After a night's journey broken by repeated stops, the train finally pulled in late to Berlin. It was going so slowly as to invite the passengers to write everything down, or at least fill in the potential memory gaps ahead of time.

Here is what I retained: there were houses, entire apartment houses, on fire on either side of the embankment; there were flames coming out of the windows of the upper stories, and glimpses of dark gorgelike streets and courtyards with trees. The only people I saw were isolated silhouettes. No crowds.

Fires were considered normal by then; Berlin was in the throes of dissolution, and the situation worsened by the day. The city had just been bombed and the all-clear signal sounded. That was why the train was moving so slowly, offering what seemed like a personal sightseeing tour.

People at the station appeared oblivious of the fires. It was business as usual: shoving crowds, curses, sudden salvos of laughter; soldiers on leave hurrying back to the front, soldiers on leave hurrying home; representatives from the female arm of the Hitler Youth, the League of German Girls, passing out hot drinks and giggling when the soldiers pawed them.

In the hall with the ticket windows, I joined a group of recent recruits my own age and, after a brief wait, was handed marching orders naming Dresden as my destination.

I can picture my fellow-recruits jabbering. We are curious, as if on an adventure. We're in a good mood. I hear myself laughing too loudly, about what I don't know.

Suddenly, an air-raid siren chased us all into the station's voluminous basement, the nearest shelter. A motley crew was soon crammed together there, soldiers and civilians, and a lot of children. There were wounded soldiers lying on stretchers and leaning on crutches. There was also a troupe of music-hall performers. They were all in costume: the siren had sent them directly from stage to cellar.

While outside the gunfire hammered on and bombs dropped far and near, they continued their show: a dwarf juggler who kept ninepins, balls, and colored hoops all in the air at one time had us mesmerized; a dainty little lady tied herself gracefully in knots while blowing kisses to the wildly applauding crowd. The troupe, whose job it was to entertain front-line soldiers, was led by a tiny old man who performed as a clown. He also coaxed a sweet, melancholy music out of a row of empty to full glasses by stroking their rims with his fingers, the smile never leaving his rouged lips. An image that has stuck with me.

As soon as the all-clear sounded, I took a tram to another station. The train for Dresden waited for departure in the gray light of morning.

It was not until here, in a Dresden as yet untouched by the war, that I understood what division I had been attached to. My new marching orders made it clear where the recruit with my name was to undergo basic training: on a drill ground of the Waffen S.S., as a panzer gunner, somewhere far off in the Bohemian Woods.

The question is: Was I frightened by

what was obvious then in the recruitment office, as I am terrified now by the double "S," even as I write this more than sixty years later?

There is nothing carved into the onion skin of my memory that can be read as a sign of shock, let alone horror. I most likely viewed the Waffen S.S. as an élite unit that was sent into action whenever a breach in the front line had to be stopped up. I did not find the double rune on the uniform collar repellent. The boy, who saw himself as a man, was probably more concerned with the branch of the service: if he was not destined for the submarines, then he would be a tank gunner in a division that was named in honor of Jörg von Frundsberg, whom I knew as the leader of the Swabian League during the sixteenth-century Peasant Wars and the "father of the Landsknechts"—crack infantry mercenaries. Someone who stood for freedom, liberation. Besides, the Waffen S.S. had a European aura to it: it included separate volunteer divisions of French and Walloon, Dutch, and Belgian, and many Norwegian and Danish soldiers; there were even said to be neutral Swedes on the Eastern Front in the defensive battle, as the rhetoric went, to save the West from the Bolshevik flood.

So there were plenty of excuses. Yet for decades I refused to admit to the word, to the double letters. What I accepted with the stupid pride of youth I wanted to conceal after the war out of a recurrent sense of shame. But the burden remained, and no one could alleviate it.

True, during the tank-gunner training, which kept me numb throughout the autumn and winter, there was no mention of the war crimes that later came to light. But the ignorance I claim cannot blind me to the fact that I had been incorporated into a system that had planned, organized, and carried out the extermination of millions of people. Even if I could not be accused of active complicity, there remains to this day a residue that is all too commonly called joint responsibility. I will have to live with it for the rest of my life.

We were trained on Panzer III and Panzer IV tanks, and we were driven like slaves. At first I thought that that was how it had to be, but my initial supply of enthusiasm soon dwindled. All of us—recruits my age and old-timers who had been transferred to the Waffen S.S. as part of what was ironically called the Hermann Göring Fund—were drilled hard from dawn to dusk and, as we had been warned from the outset, constantly raked over the coals.

I had read about it in books. I intentionally suppressed the names of the slave drivers, even the worst of them. All that I learned from the experience was mute compliance or clever tricks. I got out of drill once by feigning jaundice—I swallowed some heated oil from sardine cans—and once because of an outbreak of boils, but the infirmary, which was chronically packed, could offer only temporary refuge.

Our instructors, who were young in years but had been turned into hard-boiled cynics by their year or two at the front, were eager now to pass on the experience they had gained at the Kuban bridgehead or in tank warfare at Kursk. They did so in bitter earnest or with merciless wit or however they felt like it. Now loudly, now softly, they plied us with military lingo and outdid one another in bullying us with newfangled or time-honored Army tortures.

I did everything I was ordered to do without a second thought. Crawling under the sump of our practice tank to the command "Measure ground clearance!" Shooting at moving targets. Night marches with combat pack. Knee bends with rifle held at arm's length. It was all supposed to make a man of me.

Belatedly, a present for my seventeenth birthday arrived in the mail: a package containing woollen socks, a cake that was mostly crumbs, and a double-sided letter full of clueless worries in my father's fine penmanship. From then until Christmas, only letters; after Christmas, nothing.

The notice board led us to believe that the Ardennes offensive—the Battle of the Bulge—was going swimmingly and would turn things around at last, but soon came the bulletin admitting that the Russians had entered East Prussia. Reports of the rape and murder of German women in the Gumbinnen region occupied my thoughts during theory lectures. All day we saw enemy squadrons sending bundles of vapor trails through the frost-bright sky, wending their unimpeded way—where? It looked quite beautiful, actually, but where were our fighter pilots?

There was still a lot of talk about the V1 and V2 rockets, to say nothing of the miracle weapon that was expected to materialize any minute. Toward the end of February, when rumors of the Dresden firestorm started making the rounds, we took the oath. The moon was full, the night freezing cold. A chorus sang "If Others Prove Untrue, Yet We Shall Steadfast Be," the song of the Waffen S.S.

Soon thereafter, I witnessed an event that should have made the downfall of the German Reich evident—the organized chaos of defeat moving slowly, then with dispatch, and finally at breakneck speed. Was I able to recognize what things were coming to? Did the never-ending activity, the all-consuming need for a ladle of soup and a crust of Army bread, along with fears of various magnitudes, leave any room for insight into the general situation?

From the training camp in the Bohemian Woods we were transferred group by group to a number of outlying garrisons: one lot set off in the direction of Vienna; another was sent to defend Stettin. Mine was taken one night on a freight train via Tetschen-Bodenbach to Dresden, then farther east into Lower Silesia, where the front was reputed to be. All that remains of Dresden in my mind is the smell of burning and the sight—through the slightly open sliding door of the freight car—of charred bundles piled one on top of the other between tracks and in front of scorched façades. Some claimed to have seen shrivelled corpses, others heaven knows what. We covered up our horror then by quarrelling over what had happened; much as today what happened in Dresden lies buried under verbiage.

After being shifted in one direction, then the next, we finally found the company that we had been assigned to and joined its as yet incomplete squad in an evacuated school. The school benches piled up outside were being sawed into firewood by the kitchen crew. The accommodation awaiting us in the courtyard made it clear that the barracks existence I had led since my days as a Luftwaffe auxiliary was not over yet.

And there we sat, waiting for our famous Tiger tanks to arrive. The wait proved long but, given the regular meals and the loose discipline, tolerable. We even got to see movies.

Eventually, we received three or four Jagdpanthers, Hunting Panthers—instead of the promised Königstigers, King Tigers—which had guns with no revolving turret. And although we lacked the training to operate them, we had to clear out of the barracks and mount them in our capacity as escorts, equipped with rifles and other assault weapons.

The front was supposedly the Silesian town of Sagan, which had been recaptured but was still under fire. From Sagan, there was to be an offensive, or so we were told, to liberate Breslau, which the Russians had besieged.

At that point the film rips and, when I splice it together and switch the projector back on, all I get is a jumble of images: somewhere I throw away my threadbare footcloths and put on the woollen socks we have found in an evacuated military storehouse. We have stopped in an alluvial plain and I am stroking the first pussy willows. Did I hear an early cuckoo? Did I count its calls?

And then I see my first bodies. Soldiers young and old, in Wehrmacht uniforms. Hanging from trees still bare along the road, in marketplaces. With cardboard signs on their chests branding them as cowards and subversive elements. A boy my age—his hair, like mine, parted on the left—dangling next to a middle-aged officer of indeterminate rank, or, rather, stripped of his rank by a court-martial. A procession of corpses that we ride past with our deafening tank-track rattle.

Off to the side, I see peasants working their fields, furrow after furrow, as if nothing were wrong. One has a cow hitched to his plow.

Then I see more refugees, filling the streets: horse carts and overladen handcarts pushed and pulled by old women and adolescents; I see children clutching dolls, perched on suitcases and rope-bound bundles. An old man is pulling a cart containing two lambs, hoping to survive the war.

At this point, the reel of my first contact with the enemy must be singled out from the arbitrary concatenation of images. I can only assume that the encounter took place sometime in mid-April, when, after lengthy artillery bombardment, the Soviet Armies broke through the German lines along the Oder and the Neisse between Forst and Muskau to take revenge for their millions of dead, to conquer, to triumph.

I see our Jagdpanthers, a few armored personnel carriers, several trucks, the field kitchen, and a thrown-together troop of infantrymen and tank gunners taking up position in a grove of young trees, either to launch a counteroffensive or to form a line of defense.

Buds on the trees, birches among others. The sun giving warmth. The birds chirping. We wait, half drowsing. Someone is playing a harmonica. A private lathers up, starts shaving. And then, out of the blue—or was the birds' sudden silence a loud enough warning?—a Stalin organ overhead.

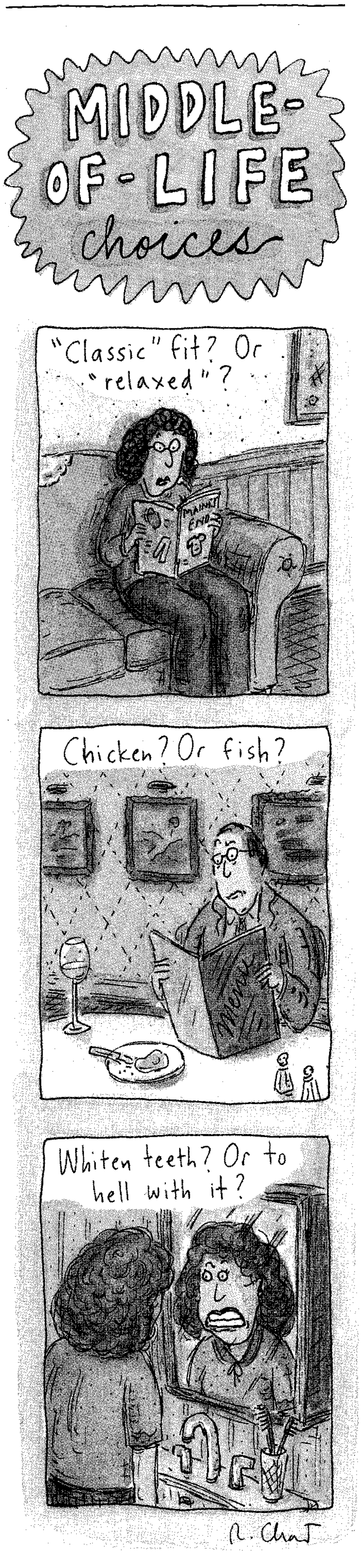
There is no time to wonder where the name comes from. Is it the way it howls, hisses, and whines? Two or three rocket launchers blanket the grove. They are ruthlessly thorough, mowing down whatever cover the young trees might promise. There is no place to hide, or is there? I see myself doing as I was taught: crawling under one of the Jagdpanthers, where I find someone else—the driver, the gunner, the commander?—measuring the space between sump and soil. Our boots touch. We are protected by the tracks on either side. The organ goes on playing for what is most likely a three-minute eternity—scared to death, I piss my pants—and then silence.

Beside me, chattering teeth.

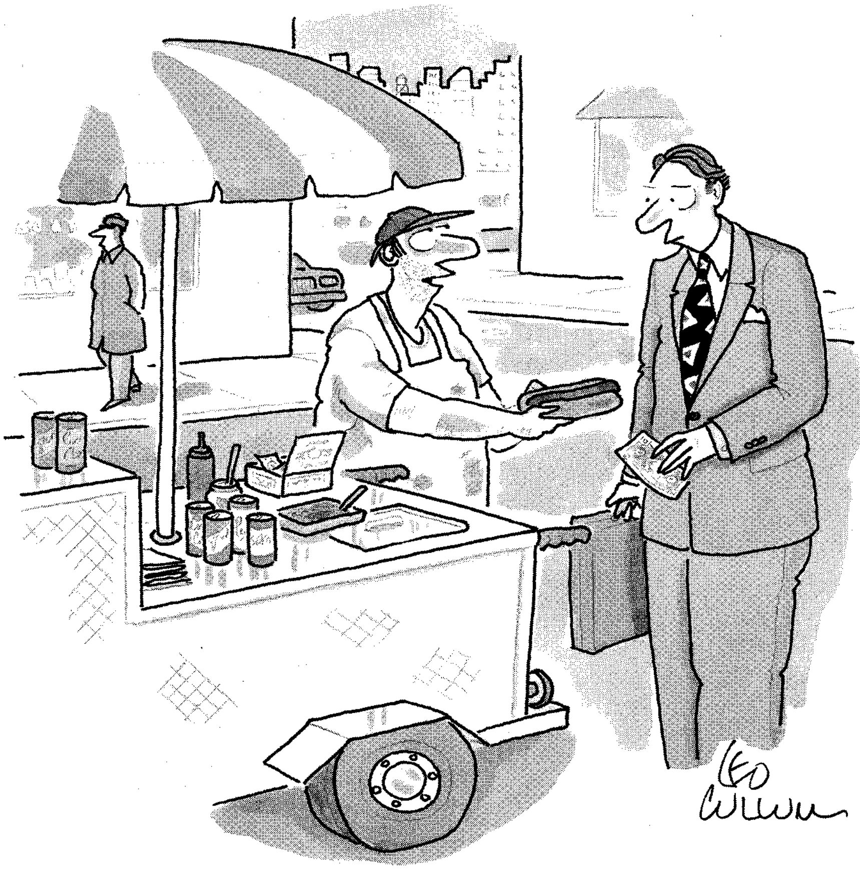
No, the chattering had begun even before the organ had played its piece to the end; nor did it stop when the screams of the wounded overpowered all other noise.

When I crawled out from under the Jagdpanther, I was assaulted by images. There were bodies everywhere, one next to the other and one on top of the other, dead, still alive, writhing, impaled by branches, peppered with shell splinters. Many were in acrobatic contortions. Body parts were strewn around.

Isn't that the boy who was tootling


MIDDLE-OF-LIFE choices
"Classic" fit? Or "relaxed"?
MAINLY END
Chicken? Or fish?
MENU
Whiten teeth? Or to hell with it?

ROZ CHAST



"They're marinated in hot water for six hours."

• •

away on the harmonica? And there's that private, his lather not yet dry. . . .

The survivors were either crawling here and there or, like me, rooted to the spot. Some wailed, though not wounded. I made no sound; I just stood there in my piss-soaked pants, staring at the innards of a boy I had been shooting the breeze with. Death seemed to have shrunk his round face.

But I had already read everything I write here. I had read it in Remarque or Céline, who—like Grimmelshausen before them, in his description of the Battle of Wittstock, when the Swedes hacked the Kaiser's troops to pieces—were merely quoting the scenes of horror that had been handed down to them. . . .

Then, suddenly, the teeth-chatterer was at my side, pulling himself up to his full height and exhibiting the rather elevated Waffen S.S. rank on his collar, his Knight's Cross medal only slightly awry under his chin, the very picture of a newsreel hero such as we schoolboys had been fed from the screen for years.

"Get a move on, soldier," he barked at me, the witness to his fear. "Assemble all able men. On the double. Get them back into formation, chop-chop. Prepare for the counterattack."

I watch him stepping over shattered bodies, both dead and alive. He looks ridiculous striding along, waving his arms, the picture-book hero no more.

From then on, the units I belonged to had no names. Battalions, companies kept dissolving. The Frundsberg was no more—if it ever had been. The Soviet Armies had moved on beyond the Oder and Neisse and formed a broad front. Our main battle lines, steamrollered and broken through, existed only on paper, but what did I know of battle lines and what they were or meant?

In the chaos of retreat, I sought to join up with scattered soldiers who were likewise trying to find their units. Even though I had had no direct contact with the enemy, I was scared to death. The soldiers hanging from the trees along the road were a constant warning of the risk run by every one of us who could not prove that he belonged to a company or was on his way to this or that unit with signed and sealed travel orders.

The central section of the Eastern Front, now retreating inexorably west, was under the command of the infamous General Schörner. According to "Schörner's orders," military police—bloodhounds, the lot of them—were to go after soldiers without marching papers and haul them, no matter what their rank, before mobile courts-martial as malingerers, cowards, and deserters. They would then be summarily and conspicuously hanged. Schörner and his orders were more to be feared than the enemy.

Twice in mid-April, I ended up behind Russian lines as part of an improvised unit. Both times I was attached to a reconnaissance troop with an unclear mission, and both times I was saved by luck, if not by chance.

My first opportunity to croak under machine-gun fire or be taken prisoner and learn to survive in Siberia presented itself when a troop of six or seven men led by a sergeant attempted to break out of the cellar of a one-story house. The house was in the Russian-occupied part of a village still under dispute.

How we'd got behind Russian lines and into the cellar of this house is unclear, but breaking out of it and racing to one of the houses on the other side of the street, which was still occupied by Germans, was supposed to save us. I can hear the sergeant, a beanpole in a cocked field hat, saying, "Now or never!"

Through the cellar window we could hear shots—single shots and machine-gun fire—going back and forth at intervals. There was nothing edible on the cellar shelves, but we could tell that the man living there, who had obviously cleared out just in time, had owned a bicycle shop, because he had used the cellar to hide his much sought-after wares, a number of which were hanging by their front wheels from wooden racks, their tires pumped and ready to go.

The sergeant must have been prone to snap decisions, because just after saying "Now or never!" he whispered rather than commanded, "Get a move on. Grab a bike, each one of you, and make a run for it."

My embarrassed but precisely formulated response—"Sorry, Sergeant, I can't ride a bike"—must have sounded like a bad joke to him. Nobody laughed. There was no time to go into the deeper reasons for my disgraceful failing: "My mother, who runs a no more than marginally profitable grocery, was unfortunately so chronically short of funds that she could not afford to buy me a bicycle, new or used, thus preventing me from acquiring a skill that might now possibly save my life. . . ."

Before I could go on, the sergeant made another snap decision: "All right, then. Grab the machine gun and cover us. We'll come back for you later."

It may be that one or another of the privates, while dutifully removing his bike from the rack, tried to allay my fear. If so, his words went unheeded. I was at the cellar window taking up a position with a weapon I had not been trained to operate. The doubly incapable soldier never had a chance to fire, however, because no sooner had the five or six men emerged from the cellar, bicycles and all, than they were mowed down by machine-gun fire out of nowhere—that is, from one side of the street or the other or both.

I think I see a wriggling, then only a twitching pile. Someone—the lanky sergeant?—turns head over heels as he falls. Then nothing moves. I may also see a front wheel sticking out of the pile, turning and turning.

I departed the bicycle-shop owner's house without the light machine gun entrusted to me, but with my rifle, and made a run for it through the back garden and the creaky gate. Behind and between gardens, I was hidden by bushes already in bud, and, having left the village still ringing with gunfire, I suddenly came to the tracks of a narrow-gauge railway bordered on both sides by shrubbery along embankments the height of a man. They ran straight in the presumed direction of our front.

After little more than a kilometre of gravel and wooden ties, I saw an undamaged bridge arching the tracks. Crossing it were jeeps and trucks carrying infantry, then a horse-drawn howitzer, then small groups of unmistakably German foot soldiers dragging their feet. Blindly, I joined their column.

I found myself in a group of twelve to fifteen men, with no heavy artillery and therefore classified as a raiding party, belonging to an "ascension commando"—soldiers' slang for suicide squad. Since I had managed to lose my rifle, I was given a submachine gun of Italian manufacture, which, had there been occasion for me to use it, would have been in unsure hands.

Our orders were to advance and seek contact with the enemy.

Dusk was descending, and after a number of false starts we wandered onto a forest path churned up by tank tracks. The tracks had been made only hours before, we learned, by a column of Tigers and armored personnel carriers racing forward to serve as an advance guard. But, hard as we tried to make radio contact with them, all that came over our walkie-talkie was gibberish and static.

The tree stock on both sides of the road was highly repetitive, pine giving way to pine. We may have had no heavy artillery to weigh us down, but we had picked up an old man along the way—his armband identified him as a member of the Volkssturm, the Home Front Army—as well as two lightly wounded soldiers, both of them, like twins, with lame left legs. The man from the Volkssturm was constantly babbling about something, quarrelling with God or cursing his neighbor; the wounded men had to be helped along, half carried. We made slow progress.

After further vain attempts to contact the tank brigade, the sergeant called for a halt. Putting to use his evident front-line savvy, he had decided to wait for the armored personnel carriers that were expected for the retreat, in the hope that they would provide transport for at least the hobblers and the Home Front bore. We'd had it for the day, in any case. Luckily, he singled me out to stand watch and ordered me to keep my eyes open.

I see another picture: Myself in my own imagination. Myself under my sliding helmet. Myself obeying an order. Myself eager to do a good job.

And that, tired as I was, I did. It wasn't long before I spied a speck of light on the now night-black path running through the woods. It divided in two as it drew nearer. After delivering my required report—"Motorized vehicle, probably armored personnel carrier, straight ahead!"—I positioned myself in the middle of the path so as to be easily spotted and, according to my orders, ready to stop the tank with, since I am left-handed, a raised left hand.

My first intimation of surprise may have come from the fact that the rapidly approaching vehicle had its headlights on full beam, and when it came to a halt two steps in front of me I realized why. Only Russians would waste lights like that. . . .

"It's the Ivans!" I shouted to the group at the side of the road, but did not take the time to differentiate the gunners sitting cheek by jowl on the enemy tank and thus meet my first Soviet soldier face to face. I broke ranks before they could shoot, diving into a stand of young pines to the right of the road, out of sight, though not out of danger.

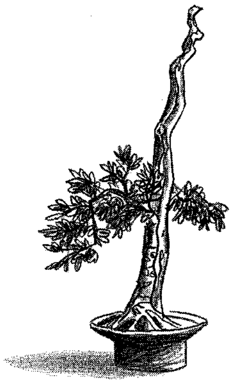
I heard shouting in two languages immediately overlaid by gunfire, until only the Russian submachine guns had their say.

Crawling through the dense pine thicket and slowly increasing my distance from the road, I was shot at from right and left but not hit, which was not necessarily the case with the group around the sergeant. The old man was no longer cursing God or his neighbor or calling for scores to be settled. The only voices I heard were Russian voices, now quite far off. Someone was laughing. He must have been in a good mood.

Because the dry twigs made such a racket, the isolated tank gunner stopped inching forward on his elbows as he had been trained to do, and played dead, as if he could thereby escape the march of history. Not until the enemy tank, which had been followed by others, started moving did he begin to crawl forward again, and he crawled on until the pine cover turned into a mature wood with Prussian-neat rows. No, I had no desire to go back and find only corpses; besides, the pale lights and engine noises coming from the road confirmed the enemy's advance.

What do I see when I hold up that lone tank gunner by the half-moonlight and view him as an early edition of the man to come?

He looks like a character who has escaped from a Grimms' fairy tale. He is about to cry. He clearly doesn't like the story in which he appears. He is still armed, still holding his submachine gun at the ready. A gas mask dangles uselessly from him like an elongated drum. All he has left in his haversack is a few crumbs of zwieback from his last ration. His canteen is half empty. His Kienzle luminous-dial wristwatch, the birthday present from his father, has long since stopped.



Now he is asleep, propped against a tree. Now he casts a shadow like the tree trunks, because it is day, but he cannot find his way out of the wood and stumbles around in a circle without knowing it, takes some crumbs out of his haversack, unscrews the top of his canteen, and drinks, sending the helmet back over his neck.

Now it is dark again and an owl is calling, and, hungry and abandoned under the moderately cloudy night sky, he chews his last crumbs.

A prisoner of the dark, he tries to recall the prayers he said as a child—"Please, dear God, stand by my side, that I may in Heav'n abide"—and maybe even calls out, "Mama, Mama," and hears his mother's voice, luring him home from far away: "Come back, my boy! I'll give you egg yolk and sugar in a glass!" But he stays where he is, alone as can be, and then something happens.

I heard steps, or something that could be construed as steps. Twigs crackling underfoot. An animal of some kind? A boar? Maybe even a unicorn?

I stood stock still and made not a sound; he or it—the animal, man, or imaginary beast that had been stepping through the wood—followed suit. Then a figure appeared, drew nearer, withdrew, only to come near again. Too near.

Careful! Don't swallow too loud. Take cover behind the tree trunks. Lessons from military training. Release the weapon's safety catch, as the other man's safety catch is almost certainly being released.

Two men assuming each other to be enemies. Conceivably, many years down the line, an idea for a ballet or a movie scene. Like the one that sets up the climax in every classic Western: the ritual dance before the final shootout.

Whistling is said to help dispel fear in a dark wood. I did not whistle. Something, perhaps the thought of my far-off mother, made me sing instead. I did not seek out a melody from among the marches we had been taught. No, it was a nursery rhyme relevant to my situation that came unbidden to my lips, and I sang the first line over and over—"Hans left home, on his own"—until I finally heard its mate: "Went into the world alone."

I can't say how long this antiphonal singing continued. Most likely until the message behind the words—two native speakers of German are wandering through the pitch-dark woods—was clear enough to allow both sides to drop cover, address each other in German soldier-speak, lower their weapons, and move within arm's length, then even closer.

My singing partner was equipped with a rifle, several more years, and several fewer centimetres than me. What I saw under his field cap—he had no helmet—was a puny little man, and what I heard was a Berlin drawl that you could cut with a knife. The scare was over the moment he lit up: a cigarette in a sullen face that said nothing.

Later, I learned that in the course of the war, starting with the Polish campaign, moving on to France and Greece, and getting as far as the Crimean peninsula, he had made it to the rank of private first class. He had no desire to advance any further. Nothing could throw him, a characteristic that in our precarious situation soon proved its worth. He became my guardian angel: he led me out of the woods and over the fields and across the Russian front line.

Since, unlike me, the private first class had been to the edge of the woods and had several opportunities to observe the bivouac fires in the open field beyond, which he judged to be enemy territory, we looked for a place that was not lit by fire. That is, he looked; I remained two paces behind him.

During a halt, he lathered his face by the light of the lingering moon and shaved off a three-day growth. I held my superior's pocket mirror for him.

Not until a field with a furrow leading westward into the darkness bolstered our courage did we abandon the protection afforded by the trees. The field looked freshly plowed and came to an end behind a swell in the soil, after which we followed a bush-lined country road that bridged a stream. The bridge was unguarded. We filled our canteens, drank, and filled them again. He had a smoke.

Two bridges down—could these have been tributaries of the Spree?—we saw the flicker of a fire in the distance. Laughter, snippets of words floated in our direction; shadow figures flitted back and forth in the glow.

After crossing the bridge, we heard a "*Stoi!*" and then another.

At the third "*Stoi!*"—the bridge was quite far behind us—my pfc. issued his directive: "Run, and as fast as you can!"

And so we ran, but we ran the sluggish run that I ran through many a postwar dream: across a field, its clumps and clods clinging to our boot soles, falling off, sticking back on, making us look as if we were running in slow motion—though we were now under submachine-gun fire and a sky exploding with signal rockets—through an extended film sequence that finally came to an end in the cover of a ditch at the far end of the field.

The Russians made no effort to flush us out. The shooting ebbed; the rockets stopped. The moon took back the sky. A rabbit hopped past leisurely, as if we were not to be feared.

On we trudged through the fields, crossing no more bridges, and just as the sun came up we saw a village that the enemy had apparently not yet occupied. It lay tranquil in the morning mist, huddled up to a church, peaceful, as if fallen out of time.

Strange that I can still picture the rather grouchy cavalry captain of Austrian descent who met us at the entry to the village behind a poorly guarded roadblock, complete with eye pouches and toothbrush mustache, even though we were exposed to him and his Home Front men for only a minute. He seemed anxious by nature, and interrupted our detailed report with a nonchalant "Just show me your marching orders," as if that were a mere catchphrase.

Since without official papers we were court-martial fodder, he had us taken away by three old men armed with hunting rifles and anti-tank guns, one of whom made a great show of being the mayor and the head of the local farmers' organization. They locked us up in the cellar of a farmhouse. Oddly enough, though, they failed to disarm us.

The cellar was lined with shelves full of bottled preserves, their labels written in grandmotherly Sütterlin script: asparagus, pickled gherkins with mustard seed, pumpkin, and green peas, as well as a blood-and-vinegar ragout and goose giblets. The jars weren't even dusty. There were also bottles of cloudy apple and elderberry juice, and, in a corner, a pile of potatoes with sprouts the size of a little finger.

We spooned lard with pork chunks straight from the jar and munched on the gherkins, washing it all down with the juice and stopping only when we were on the point of vomiting. Then the pfc. smoked a cigarette. Like my mother, he was a master at blowing smoke rings. I took my gas mask out of its case and filled the case with jam.

Having waited two hours to be summoned to our court-martial, the likely verdict of which we refrained from discussing—we had probably slipped into an after-dinner doze, because I do not recall the interval as a period of apprehension—the pfc. tried the cellar door. It was unlocked. The key was hanging from the outside keyhole. No one was guarding us.

The village must have been evacuated in the meantime. The officer had either forgotten us or in a fit of melancholy delivered us into the hands of a capricious fate. The sparrows were doing their calisthenics on the roadblock's freshly chopped pine logs. The sun was warm. We felt like bursting into song.

On one side of the block, we had an unobstructed view of the fields: the enemy, the Russian infantry, was advancing in protective ranks. I couldn't make out any faces, but the distance was closing step by step. You could count them from left to right. Each a target.

Yet I did not aim my submachine gun, nor did my pfc. attempt to defend the village with his rifle. We made tracks, noiseless tracks. Even if the Ivans had shot on command or out of habit, we would not have shot back.

We did not act out of brotherly love and we deserve no credit. What kept us from aiming and pulling the trigger was more like reason, or the absence of necessity. That is why the claim I have so often made—namely, that during the week in which the war had me firmly in its grasp I never fired a shot—is at best a way of alleviating in retrospect the shame that remains. Yet the fact remains: we did not shoot. What is less certain is when I exchanged my uniform jacket for one less onerous. Did I do so of my own accord?

It was more likely the pfc. who, his eye on the runes on my collar, recommended the change of jacket. He could not have been pleased about my markings. Through me, though he did not put it in those terms, he had got into bad company. What he did say at some point, either in the larder of a cellar or while shaving or puffing on his cigarette, was: "Listen, boy, if those Ivans nab us, you're in for it. They see those ornaments on your collar, they'll shoot you in the neck. No questions asked."

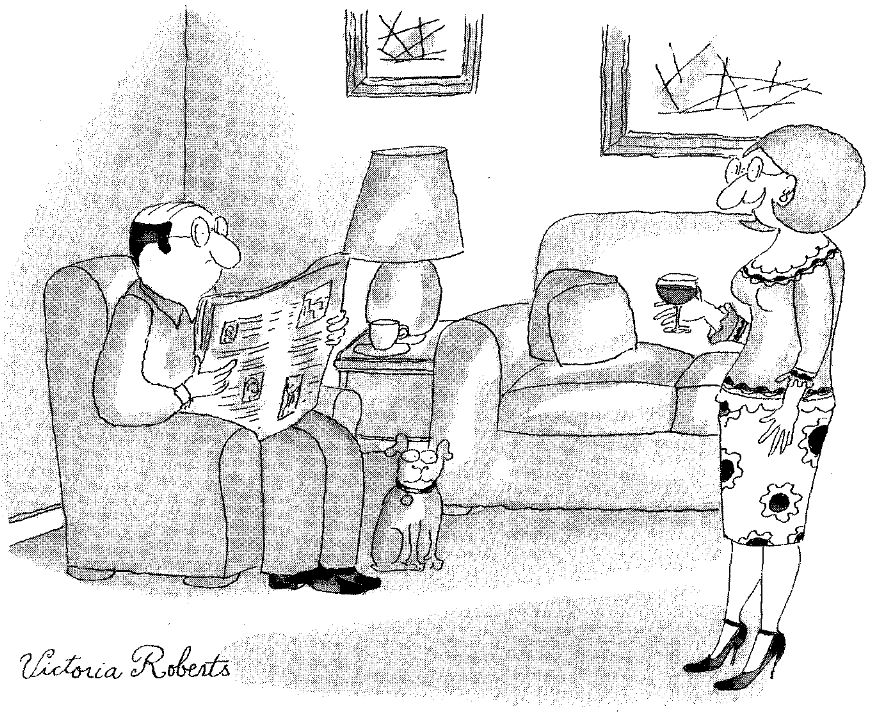
How he did it I don't know, but he managed to "organize"—as the soldiers used to say—an ordinary Wehrmacht jacket somewhere. One without bullet holes or bloodstains. It even fit. Minus the double rune, he liked me a lot better. I came to like me better, too.

After is always before. What we call the present, this fleeting *nownownow*, is constantly overshadowed by a past now, in such a way that the escape route known as the future can be marched to only in lead-soled shoes.

Thus encumbered and at a distance of sixty years, I see a seventeen-year-old with an indecently bulging gas-mask case and a like-new tailored uniform jacket, doing everything possible to join up with the units flooding back through Germany, side by side with a tough slyboots of a pfc. who has seen it all and whom you'd never guess to be a barber by trade. Together, they repeatedly make their way around the "bloodhounds." There are always holes to be found. The front is not easy to recognize. And they are only two among thousands of soldiers who have lost their regiments.

Then, on the road from Senftenberg to Spremberg, which is packed with horses and carts full of refugees, the two of them, in the same field-gray battle dress yet so ill-matched, take advantage of the crush to negotiate purchase of an official document, life-giving marching orders, at an improvised assembly point, which is out in the open at the side of the road and consists of a table and a stool. There is some printed paper on the table. The war-weary master sergeant on the stool asks no questions, writes quickly, slams down his stamp.

Now we are protected: we belong to a newly assembled combat group. True,



"Surprising me—that's your life's work."

NO, NO, NO! WE NEVER START PLAYING WITH AN EMPTY TIP JAR!
PIANO-BAR LESSONS

• •

for the time being it exists only on paper, as a vague promise, but we can see a perfectly concrete mobile field kitchen—the "goulash cannon" of soldiers' slang—set up in the meadow behind the table, its kettle steaming and sending out a soupy aroma.

We join the line. All together. Not even officers may pull rank. Come the end, fate dishes out moments of rank-free anarchy.

We have potato soup with bits of meat floating in it. The mess boy ladles each of us a scoop from the bottom, then a half scoop from the top. The mess tin we each have buckled onto our haversacks is just the right size. The mood is neither down nor up. Typical April weather. The sun is out.

Now we are facing each other, our spoons moving in rhythm. "Hey," says somebody a few steps away, without breaking the rhythm of his spoon, "isn't today Adolf's birthday? So where's the extra ration? And the chocolate, the cigarettes, a shot of brandy for the toast! *Heil, mein Führer!*"

Now somebody tries to tell a joke, but gets all mixed up. Infectious laughter. A peaceful scene. All it needs is an accordion player.

We were standing near a street on which a column of tanks trying to advance and counterattack was being obstructed by a column of refugees advancing in the opposite direction. There was no room to maneuver on one side of the road.

And then came the first explosions of the Soviet tank grenades.

Between one spoonful and another, my pfc. said, "Those are T-34s."

"T-34s," said his echo. Me.

A number of tanks had emerged from the woods and begun climbing the deep quarry by the opposite side of the road. Small as toys, they stopped and fired. The traffic on the street had come to a halt, presenting the enemy fire with an easy target. The shots came closer. Our Jagdpanther tanks, because of their fixed barrels, had to turn before they could respond. Commands vying with screams, our tanks pushed packed carts and their passengers and horses over the edge of the road into the quarry pit, tipping them over like trinkets.

Now I see a handsome lieutenant gesticulating out of an open turret as if trying to change the direction of the barrels with his bare hands; I see Silesian peasants refusing to let their possessions go; I see doll-like children on carts sliding off the road; I see women screaming, but I fail to hear their cries; I see grenades exploding, sometimes far off, sometimes nearby—silently they find their targets. So as not to see, I stare at the remains of the soup in my mess tin. On the one hand, I am still a hungry man; on the other, a dumbfounded observer, a mere witness to the filmlike action. I seem to be dreaming, but I am and remain awake until the helmet, its strap now flapping, flies off my head, and my senses vanish.

Where is my pfc.? Where is my submachine gun, my two magazines of ammunition? Why am I still standing—or standing again?

The badly bleeding wound in my right thigh drenching my trousers. The pain in my chin caused by the helmet strap. A limp arm dangling from my left shoulder, which refuses to obey when I try, with the help of someone else, to lift—there he is!—my pfc.

His legs torn to pieces. His torso apparently intact. His eyes open wide, amazed, unbelieving . . .

Then a whirl of sand dust shifts my gaze to the field kitchen, still steaming, unscathed, where it remains until we—he carried, I supported—and another wounded man are loaded into a field ambulance. An orderly climbs in. Other victims, left behind, curse; one of them insists on coming with us and clings to the vehicle. . . . At last the door is shut and bolted.

We rumble along, presumably to the dressing station.

The smell of Lysol. I must have felt safe in the ambulance. The war had taken a break. At any rate, nothing much was going on, especially as we were so slow in finding the way. The pfc. lay flat on his back. His formerly smooth, pink, shiny face—the result of frequent shaves—was tinged with green, and stubble was beginning to show. He seemed to have shrunk. His legs were bandaged, wrapped in gauze.

He lay, conscious, on a plank bed, looking at me out of the corner of his eye. He was trying to form words, and finally, in a softer version of his drawl, managed to ask for a cigarette. I extracted one from the crumpled packet in his breast pocket, together with his lighter.

I, the nonsmoker, lit it for him and stuck it between his lips. The lips suddenly stopped trembling. He took a few greedy puffs, shut his eyes, but immediately opened them in terror, as if he had only then understood his condition. Now I saw fear written on his face, and it startled me. Then, after an interval, during which I heard the groans of the wounded and the curses of the orderly—he was short on gauze—and wondered at my own oddly pain-free condition, my pfc. asked me—no, ordered me—to open his trousers and his underpants, too, and reach in and check between his legs.

Having received confirmation that everything was present and accounted for, he let out a quiet groan, took a few more puffs, then dropped off, breathed calmly, looked tranquil.

We were separated at the dressing station: he was put in a tent, I left out in the open. When the time came for my thigh to be bandaged, I became a laughingstock for the following reason: the gas-mask case, which was still attached to me, had been slit open by a finger-length grenade splinter and the contents had gushed out and made a mess of jam in my pants. From then on, my trouser seat stuck to me whenever I sat down. In time it attracted ants, which was nothing to laugh at.

Not until after my thigh was bandaged did they bandage my left shoulder, which was hardly bleeding, though it was likely that a foreign object made of metal, however small, had lodged there. The hole it had made in my new uniform jacket was all but invisible. The dangling arm was now supported by a sling. As evident as the war was all around us, it was suddenly over for me.

We were loaded onto a train that evening. It must have been the night of the twentieth to the twenty-first of April, because the Army doctor, the orderlies, and my fellow walking wounded were making the same complaints I'd heard being bandied about the field kitchen that afternoon: Where were the extras they'd passed around every year on the Führer's birthday? No cigarettes, no sardines, no bottle of Doppelkorn per four men, no nothing. All the soldiers—even me, a nonsmoker—found this situation more upsetting and of greater import than the fall of the German Reich so obviously taking place.

Where the freight train in which I lay with all the wounded was headed I had no idea. It made frequent endlessly long and occasional short stops and was shunted several times onto different tracks. Soon, it was dark out. The only light we had came from a primitive acetylene lamp.

We lay on rotten, piss-smelling straw. The man to the left of me, a member of the mountain troops with a bandage around his head, was reading a religious book by the glimmer of a pocket flashlight. He was moving his lips. The man to my right had been shot in the stomach and writhed and screamed until he writhed and screamed no more.

There was no water to be had, no orderly to tend to the pleas of the wounded.

The night seemed never-ending; it lasted in my dreams through the early postwar years. When the train came to its final stop, the goods, both the quick and the dead, were unloaded, and an Army doctor checked off our names on the list, separating the seriously wounded from the rest. A glance was enough. It took no time at all.

The ancient and miraculously undamaged cathedral town of Meissen lay bathed in the spring-morning light. True to the folk song, the birds were all there.

The seriously wounded were hauled away in trucks; the rest of us, propping each other up, hobbled along the path leading to the fortress, which had been turned into a military hospital. Locals, mostly women, lined the path, and many helped the disabled.

I was anything but well cared for there in the fortress. The hospital was full to bursting, its corridors lined with emergency pallets. Exhausted doctors, harried nurses. Everything was in short supply, especially medicine. All they could do for me was put fresh bandages on my right thigh and my left shoulder, in which—it was now official, confirmed by a signed and stamped document—a small grenade splinter had lodged. They did not deem me worthy of an operation, nor did they waste a tetanus shot on me.

Finally, along with a document promising the shot and a pair of trousers, I was handed new marching orders, my last: destination Marienbad. Once a spa for the rich and famous, much celebrated in literature—as an old man, Goethe had fallen in love with a young thing there, was given the brushoff, and sublimated his grief in a "Marienbad Elegy"—it lay on the other side of the Ore Mountains, far off in the Sudetenland.

While I was waiting for the orders, my pfc. was pushed out of the operating room in a wheelchair. His legless torso wrapped in gauze rolled past deep in sleep, leaving behind the question of whether his coming out of that sleep was to be desired or feared. He had never told me his name.

I have no idea how I made it over the Ore Mountains. Some stretches by train and—since trains were then a rarity—by horse and cart through villages whose names now escape me. Somehow, I managed to make progress. And never did I deviate from my marching orders.

I spent one night in the mountains with a couple who kept rabbits behind their house. Man and wife were both teachers. I had begun to run a temperature, and they offered to look after me, give me civilian clothes, and hide me in the cellar until, as they said, "it's all finally over." Their son, whose picture, ringed in black, I saw in a bookcase, had fallen at the Battle of Sevastopol. He was about twenty years young. His clothing would have fit me. I could reach out and take down his books.

I didn't stay. I wanted to go where my travel papers ordered me to go, to cross the mountains in my own trousers, which after a thorough washing had ceased to attract ants. The couple stood in front of their shingle-roofed cottage and watched me disappear.

And I made it, heaven knows how, all the way to Karlsbad, that other spa with literary and—given its connection with Metternich—political connotations, where I fell to my knees in the street and couldn't get up.

I had a fever. It may have been caused by the grenade splinter in my shoulder or by the lack of a tetanus shot. My left arm was now stiff down to my fingertips, but I don't recall being in pain.

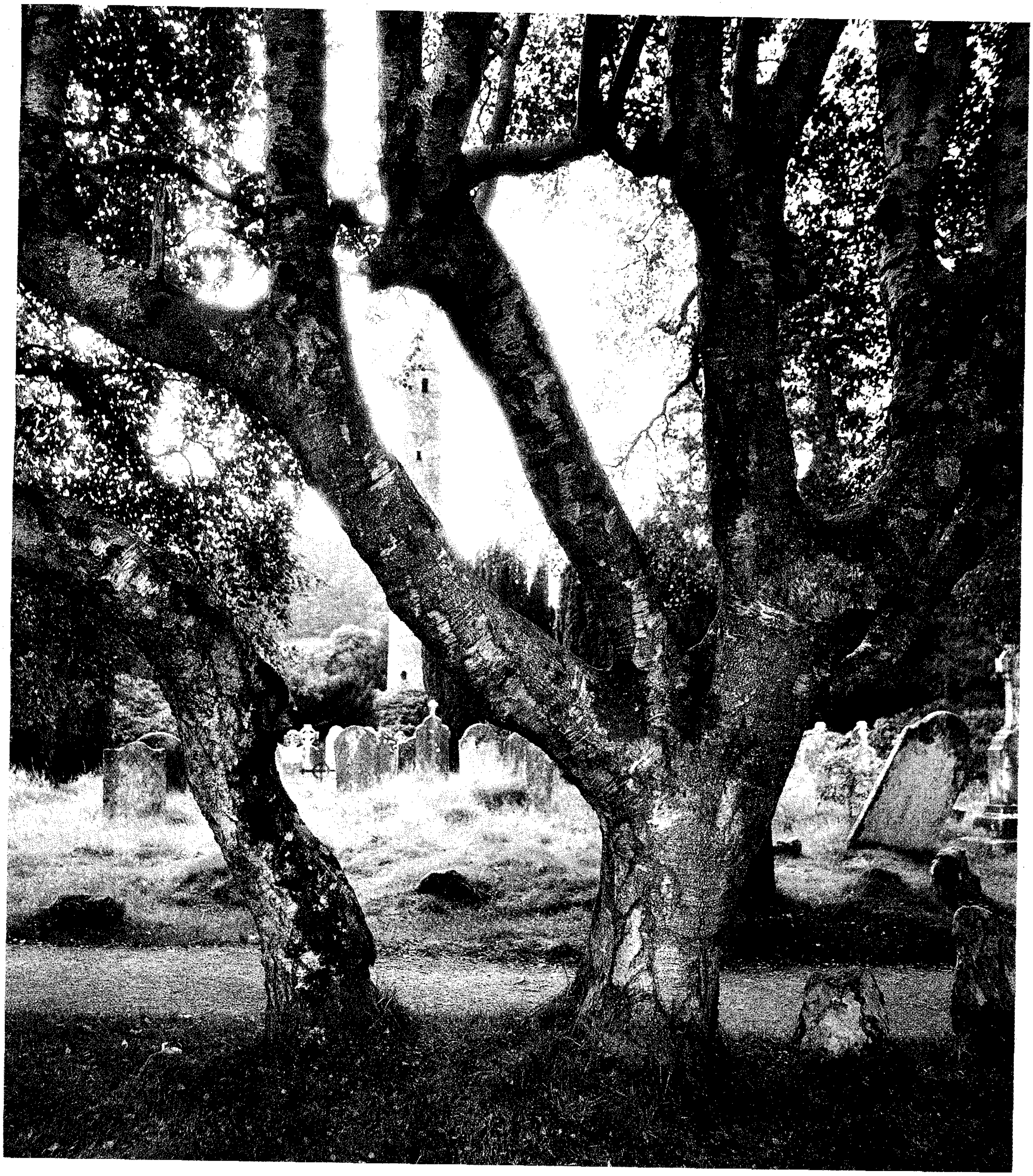
The military policeman who picked me up followed my marching orders to the letter. He apparently draped me over the back seat of his motorcycle—I was unconscious—buckled me down, and drove me to Marienbad, where for the panzer gunner the war had indeed ended. By the time he had dropped me off and I had been placed, still feverish, in a freshly made bed, the Führer was no more. ♦

(*Translated, from the German, by Michael Henry Heim.*)

FICTION

FAITH

BY WILLIAM TREVOR



She was a difficult woman, had been a willful child, a moody, recalcitrant girl given to flashes of temper; severity and suspicion came later. People didn't always know what they were doing, Hester liked to point out, readily speaking her mind, which she did most often to her brother, Bartholomew. She was forty-two now, he three years younger. She hadn't married, had never wanted to.

There was a history here: of Hester's influence while the two grew up together in crowded accommodation above a bread shop in a respectable Dublin neighborhood. Their father was a clerk in Yarruth's timber yards, their mother took in sewing and crocheting. They were poor Protestants, modest behind trim net curtains in Maunder Street, with pride in their religion, in being themselves. Her bounden duty, Hester called it, looking after Bartholomew.

When the time came, Bartholomew didn't marry, either. An intense, serious young man, newly ordained into the Church of Ireland, he loved Sally Carbery and was accepted when he proposed. Necessarily a lengthy one, the engagement weathered the delay, but on the eve of the wedding it fell apart, which was a disappointment Bartholomew did not recover from. Sally Carbery—spirited and humorous, a source of strength during their friendship, beautiful in her way—married a man in Jacob's Biscuits.

Hester worked for the Gas Board, and gave that up to look after her father when he became a widower, suffering from Parkinson's disease for the last nine years of his life. That was her way; it was her nature, people said, compensation for her brusque manner. Her sacrifice was applauded. "We've always got on," Hester said on the evening of their father's funeral. "You and I have, Bartholomew."

He didn't disagree, but knew that there was something missing in how his sister put this. They got on because, dutiful in turn, he saw to it that they did. Bartholomew's delicate good looks—fair hair, blue eyes—made the most of a family likeness that was less pleasing in Hester, his lithe ranginess cumbersome in a woman. All in all—it seemed only right that there should be adjustment, that any efforts made in the question of getting on should be his, and without acknowledgment.

Bartholomew didn't have a parish of his own. He assisted in one on the north side of the city, where Maunder Street was, too: visiting the elderly, concerned with Youth Reach and Youth Action and the running of the Youth Centre, on Saturdays taking parties of children to ramble in the Dublin mountains or to swim in one of the north side's swimming pools. He and Hester shared the family possessions when it was clearly no longer practical to retain the rented accommodation above the bread shop; Bartholomew found a room in the parish where he worked; Hester looked about for one. She made inquiries at the Gas Board about returning to a position similar to the one she had filled in the past, but for the moment there was nothing. Then she discovered Oscarey.

It was a townland in the Wicklow mountains, remote and bleak, once distinguished by the thriving presence of Oscarey House, of which no trace now remained. But the church that late in the house's existence had been built on the back avenue, for the convenience of the family and its followers, was still standing; and the estate's scattering of dwellings—the houndsman's and its yard and kennels, the gamekeeper's, the estate agent's pebble-dashed house—had undergone renovation and were all occupied. There was a Spar food store at Oscarey crossroads, an Esso petrol pump; letters could be posted a few miles away.

Bartholomew drove his sister to Oscarey when she asked him to. They went on a Monday, which was his free day, leaving early in the morning to avoid the Dublin traffic. He didn't know the purpose of their journey, hadn't yet been told, but Hester quite often didn't reveal her intentions, and he knew that eventually she would. It didn't occur to him to make the connection he might have.

"There's a man called Flewett," Hester said in the car, reading the name from her own handwriting on a scrap of paper. "He'll tell us."

"What, though, Hester?"

She said then—a little, not much, not everything. The small church at Oscarey that had served a purpose in the past was being talked about again. A deprived Church of Ireland community, among it the descendants of indoor servants, gardeners, and estate workers, was without a convenient means of worship. A consecrated building was moldering through disuse.

They drove through Blessington, Bartholomew's very old A-30 van—used mainly for his Saturday trips to the mountains—making a tinny sound he hadn't noticed before. He didn't mention it but went on, hoping it was nothing much.

"It came to me," Hester said.

"Who's Flewett, though?"

"One of the people around."

She didn't say how she had heard about this man or offer further information about him.

"We'll see what Mr. Flewett has to say," she said.

Conversation with Hester was often like that; Bartholomew was used to it. Details withheld or frugally proffered made the most of what was imparted, as if to imbue communication with greater interest. Strangers sometimes assumed this to be so, only to realize a little later that Hester was not in the least concerned with such pandering; it was simply a quirk—without a purpose—that caused her to complicate conversation in this manner. She didn't know where it came from and did not ever wonder.

"What d'you think?" Bartholomew asked the man at the garage where he stopped for petrol, and the man said the tinny noise could be anything.

"Would you rev the engine for me?" he suggested, opening the bonnet when he'd finished at the petrol pump. "Give her the full throttle, sir," he instructed, and then, "D'you know what I'm going to tell you, sir? The old carburetor in this one's a bit shook. Ease her down now, sir, till we'll take a look."

Bartholomew did so, then turned the engine off. As he understood it, the carburetor had loosened on its fixing. Adjusting a monkey wrench, the man said it would take two seconds to put right, and when it was done he wouldn't charge for it, although Bartholomew pressed him to.

"There was a line or two about Oscarey in the *Gazette*," Hester said as they drove off again, referring to the magazine that was a source of Church of Ireland news. "They're managing with a recorded service."

It was as it always had been, she was thinking, Bartholomew offering the man money when it hadn't been asked for. The soft touch of the family, their father had called him, and used that

JON MICHAEL RILEY, "GLENDALOUGH, COUNTY WICKLOW" (2007)

same expression, laughing a bit, when Bartholomew first wanted to become a clergyman. But even so he hadn't been displeased; nor had their mother, nor Hester herself. Bartholomew's vocation suited him; it completed him, and protected him, as Hester tried to do in other ways.

"Lucky I called in there," he was saying, and Hester sensed that he had guessed by now why they were driving to Oscarey. He had put it all together, which was why he referred again to the stop at the garage, for often he didn't want to talk about what had to be talked about, hoping that whatever it was would go away of its own accord. But this was something that shouldn't be allowed to go away, no matter how awkward and difficult it was.

"Good of him to want to help," he said, and Hester watched a flight of rooks swirling out of a tree as they passed it.

"It's interesting, how things are," she said. "At Oscarey."

It was still early when they arrived there, ten to eleven when Bartholomew drew up outside the Spar shop at the crossroads. "A Mr. Flewett?" he inquired at the single checkout, and was given directions.

He left the main road, drove slowly in a maze of lanes. Here and there, there was a signpost. They found the church almost immediately after they turned into what had been the back avenue of Oscarey House, grown over now. There were graves but hardly what could be called a churchyard: no more than a narrow strip of land beside a path close to the church itself, running all the way around it. One of the graves, without a headstone, was more recent than the others. The church was tiny, built of dark, almost black stone that gave it a forbidding air.

"A chapel of ease it might have been," Bartholomew said.

"Mr. Flewett'll know all about that."

Inside, the church was musty, though with signs of use. The vases on the altar were empty, but there were hymn numbers—8, 196, 516—on the hymn board. The brass of the lectern was tarnished, and the brass of the memorial plates; the altar cloth was tattered and dingy. The slightly tinted glass of the windows—a bluish gray—did not have Biblical scenes. You couldn't call it much of a church, Bartholomew considered, but didn't say.

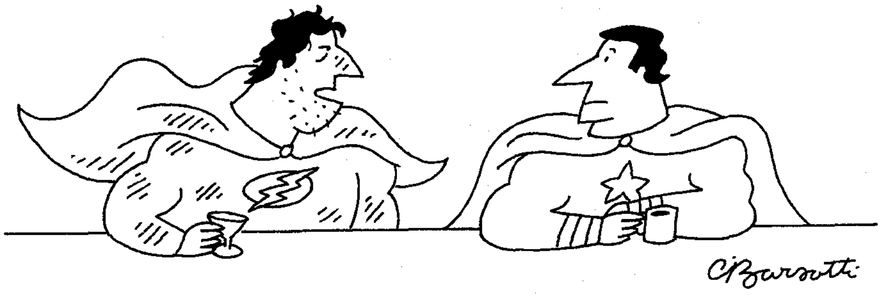
"It could be lovely," his sister said.

Mr. Flewett was elderly, which Hester had predicted he would be. He was on his own these days, he said, bringing tea on a tray, with biscuits in a tin. He had been welcoming at the hall door, although he had examined his visitors closely before he invited them into his house.

"We have the recording of the service, of course," he said. "I'm in charge of that myself. Morning Prayer only."

Oscarey church was one of several in a combined benefice, the most distant being seventeen miles away. "Too far for Canon Furney, and there are a few who can't take to the recording, so they make the journey to the Canon at Clonbyre or Nead. On the other hand, of course, there's Mrs. Wharton's kindness."

That took some time to explain. The small scattered community of Oscarey was a mixture now of poor and better-off: besides the remnants of the estate families, there were newcomers. Mrs. Wharton—no longer alive—had been one of the latter. Her will left her house and a considerable legacy to Oscarey church, this money to provide a stipend for a suitable incumbent, the house to become Oscarey Rectory.



"The evil masterminds tried everything, then one of them offered me a Cosmo."

"That's what this is about," Mr. Flewett went on, pouring more tea.

Hester nodded. "I heard something like it," she said. "That perhaps a younger man . . ."

"Indeed."

Bartholomew felt uneasy. Hester often became carried away. In the sad, grimy little church, he had understood how her imagination had been excited and still was, but the poverty of the place had a finality about it, even as the attempts to disguise its neglect had. There was no obvious way in which the impossible could be reversed.

"The Church of Ireland moves slowly," Mr. Flewett said. "I think we can agree about that. And of course Mrs. Wharton died only five months ago. But time eats away at good intentions. Her wishes must be honored. She is buried in our little graveyard."

"I think we might have noticed," Bartholomew said.

"Canon Furney is seventy-one. He'll not retire and there's no reason why he should. He's a good, dear man and no one would want him to. What we fear, though, is that, when he goes, Clonbyre and Nead will be taken in with Oscarey again and Oscarey possibly abandoned, so far away we are. But Mrs. Wharton's house would be a better rectory than the one there is now at Clonbyre, and her generosity otherwise is what the benefice is crying out for."

"You've been very kind, Mr. Flewett," Bartholomew said. "It's been interesting. But we've taken up your time and we mustn't do that."

"Indeed you haven't. No, not at all."

"I hope it all works out for you."

"All of us at Oscarey hope that."

Bartholomew stood up. He held out his hand, and then Mr. Flewett shook Hester's hand, too.

"I meant it in my letter," he said. "Come any time. I'm always here. People will be pleased you came."

Hester nodded. She had a way sometimes of not smiling, and she didn't now. But she nodded again, as if to make up for that. In the car Bartholomew said, "What letter?"

Hester didn't answer. Preoccupied, she stared ahead. It was February, too soon for spring, but fine.

"Did you write to him, Hester?"

"The little piece in the *Gazette* was

about that woman leaving money and the house. It gave his name."

Bartholomew said nothing. His sister did things for the best; he'd always known that. It sometimes didn't seem so, but he knew it was.

"Will we have another look at the church?" she said.

He drew in when they came to it. The hump of earth they'd noticed, the newest of the graves, was just beginning to green over and had been tended, the grass clipped in a rectangle around it.

"I hope they know what they're doing," Hester said, pushing open the heavy west door. "I'd keep it locked myself."

The missionary leaflets by the collection box were smeared and dog-eared, and Bartholomew noticed now that there was bird lime on curtains that were there in place of a door to the vestry.

"I'd get rid of that coconut matting," Hester said.

They didn't stop on the way back to Dublin. Hester was quiet, as often she was, not saying anything until they were in Maunder Street. "I have eggs I could scramble," she said then, and Bartholomew followed her through the empty rooms.

"How long have you left here?" he asked, and his sister said until the end of next week. There'd been a place near Fairview Park and he asked about it. No good, she said. Drumcondra the same.

"I'm sorry you're having difficulties. I've kept an eye out."

"The Gas Board'll have me back. Someone they weren't expecting to left."

"Well, there's that, at least."

Hester was not enthusiastic. She didn't say, but Bartholomew knew. In the denuded kitchen, he watched while she broke the yolks of the eggs with a fork, beating them up, adding milk and butter, then sprinkling on pepper. Since their childhood he had resented, without saying it, her interference, her indignation on his behalf, her possessiveness. He had forgiven what she couldn't help, doing so as natural in him as scorn and prickliness were in her. She had never noticed, had never been aware of how he felt.

"You'd take to Oscarey," Hester said.

Before Bartholomew and his sister made their lives at Oscarey, there was an inevitability about the course of events. In private, Bartholomew did not think about what was happening in terms of Hester, considering rather that this was what had been ordained for him, that Hester's ordering of the circumstances was part of that. Fifteen years ago, when Sally Carbery had decided against marriage at the last minute, it was because she feared Hester. She had been vague when suddenly she was doubtful, and was less truthful than she might have been. Unaware of that at the time, Bartholomew was bewildered; later he came to believe that in influencing Sally Carbery's second thoughts Hester had, then, too, been assigned a role in the pattern conceived by a greater wisdom. "Silly," Hester's word for Sally Carbery had been, even before Sally Carbery and Bartholomew loved one another.

The Church approved the rescuing of Oscarey; and it was anticipated, as Mr. Flewett had surmised, that when old Canon Furney died the benefice of Clonbyre, Nead, and Oscarey would become one again, and that the unnecessarily spacious, drafty rectory in poor repair at Clonbyre would be abandoned in favor of a smaller, more comfortable one at Oscarey. This came about, and the manner in which human existence—seeming to be shaped by the vagaries of time and chance—was in fact obedient to a will became the subject of more than one of Bartholomew's sermons. Verses of the Scriptures were called upon to lend credence to his conclusions, which more than anything else claimed that the mysterious would never be less than mysterious, would always be there, at the heart of spiritual life. That the physical presence of things, and of words and people, amounted to very little made perfect sense to Bartholomew.

It did to Hester, too. Belief was part of Hester, taken for granted, a sturdy certainty that brought her confidence and allowed her to insist she must be taken as she was, allowed her to condemn as a dishonesty any concealment of personal traits. When her brother's fourteen parishioners at Oscarey, and the twenty-seven at Clonbyre, and the eleven at Nead came to know her, there was agreement—as elsewhere there had often been before—that she and Bartholomew were far from alike. None among the parishioners feared Hester as Sally Carbery had, since none possessed a fiancée's intuition, only a stranger's perspicacity. Sally Carbery's fear—to do with the prospect of the future, of being more closely involved with Hester, was understandable. At Oscarey, and Clonbyre and Nead, there was only Hester as she was, a talking point because of it.

As the two aged, the understanding between them that had survived the cramped conditions of Maunder Street was supported by reminiscence—the smell of fresh bread every early morning, the unexpected death of their mother, their father's a mercilessly slow one, the two cremations at Glasnevin. Seaside photographs taken at Rush and Bettystown were in an album, visits to both grandmothers and to aunts were remembered, and hearing other generations talked about. The present was kept a little at bay: that congregations everywhere continued to dwindle, that no ground had been regained by the Church or seemed likely to be, was not often mentioned. Hester was indifferent to this. Bartholomew was increasingly a prey to melancholy, but did not let it show, to Hester or to anyone.

For her part, Hester had given herself the task of restoring Oscarey church, scraping the tiled floor, washing the altar cloths, polishing the neglected pews and brass. The church was hers, she considered, for she had found it and brought life to it, making more of it than a mere outward and visible sign. It was not her way to say all was well, that because of her work everything was good; there was a presumption in that she didn't care for, and such sentiments cloyed. But as she knelt before her brother at the altar rails, while he raised the cup or again wiped clean its rim, she knew that all this was meant to be. He was here, where he should be, and so should she, where her unyielding spirit had brought them. "The peace of God," he ended each occasion of worship, and gave his blessing. The words were special. And her brother saying them in the hush while Hester still knelt among the few who came to Oscarey church, before the shuffling and the whispering began, was special, too.

Except at weddings and the christenings that sometimes followed them, there were no young among the congregations of the three churches, and with nostalgia

Bartholomew now and again remembered Youth Reach and Youth Action and the Saturday rambles to Kilmashogue and Two Rock. On Sundays, when he looked down from the pulpit at aged faces, at tired eyes, heads turned to hear him better, and when his hand was afterward shaken at the door, he sensed the hope that had flickered into life during the service: in all that was promised, in Psalm and Gospel, in his own interpretations, the end was not an end.

Then—as it happened, on a Sunday night—Bartholomew with cruel suddenness was aware of a realization that made him feel as if he had been struck a blow so powerful it left him, though not in pain, without the full use of his faculties. This happened in his bedroom before he had begun to undress. The bedside light was on; he had closed the door, pulled down the two blinds, and was standing beside his bed, having just untied the laces of his shoes. For a moment, he thought he had fallen down, but he had not. He thought he could not see, but he could see. A shoe was in one hand, which brought something of reality back, and sitting down on the edge of the bed did, too. The clatter of the shoe on the linoleum when it slipped from his grasp brought more. Sensations of confusion lingered while he sat there, then were gone.

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven . . ."

His own voice made no sense, and yet went on.

Afterward, Bartholomew told himself that what had occurred must surely be no more than a mood of petulance, an eruption from his half-stifled impatience with the embroidery and frills that dressed the simplicity of truth, with the invasive, sentimental stories that somehow made faith easier, and the hymns he hated. For Bartholomew, the mystery that was the source of all spiritual belief, present through catastrophe and plague and evil, was a strength now, too, and more than it had ever been. Yet there was disquiet, a stirring in his vocation that he had brought upon himself and wished he had not. Seeking guidance, he dwelt on his memories of the euphoria he had been aware of when his profession had first seemed to be chosen for him. There were no reservations then, and he searched for what it was, in himself, that had allowed his unquestioning credence. But no help came from that far-off time, and Bartholomew—not knowing what he should otherwise do—continued to visit the lonely and the sick, to repeat the Te Deum, the Creed, the Litany. He felt he should not and yet he did.

Hester noticed no change in her brother, and he had told her nothing. Her own fulfillment, through him, continued, her belief undiminished, her certainties unchallenged. In her daily life all she distrusted she still distrusted. Her eye was cold, her scorn a nourishment; and then, for Hester, too, when more time had passed, there was adversity. She did not complain. "Oh, we all must die," she said when she learned that she was to, herself, sooner than she had ever expected.

A doctor whom she had hardly bothered since coming to Oscarey confirmed his first suspicions, gently taking from her the small hope he had permitted to remain since her previous visit. He told her what she had to know, and she said nothing. Afterward, alone, she did not weep; nor did she prepare her brother for what awaited both of them. But one morning, when the remains of spring and all of summer had gone, when they were sitting in warm September sunshine in their small garden, she told him. Hester was not yet sixty then.

Bartholomew listened with incredulous dismay. Yet Hester spoke so fearlessly, accepting as her due a simple fact, that a display of emotion on his part seemed out of place. Her tone was casual, her clasped hands still, her eyes unflinching. She did not ask for pity, she never had. The next remark she made was about their continuing Indian summer.

"I'm sorry," Bartholomew said.

He didn't know her: that thought came which never had before. Her severity, the outspokenness that was natural to her, told too little. She had saved him from Sally Carbery, she would have said, believing that was the honest way to put it. He'd known in childhood that she wasn't liked. He had tried to make it up to her, and was glad now that he had.

But shadowing these reflections, and belittling them, was what Hester bore so stoically. It stalked the past, and was in charge of all the time that now was left. And yet, for Bartholomew, his own trouble was the greater agony; he could not help it that this was so, and in a familiar manner guilt began. That day he did more in the house, taking on his sister's tasks.

"What courage you have," Bartholomew said when autumn had passed, and winter, too.

Hester shook her head. Courage came with misfortune; she took no credit for it. She asked for primroses and watched while Bartholomew picked them from the bank where they grew. That night they were on her bedside table, in a glass there'd been at Maunder Street.

"Why did they give me that awful name?" she asked when Bartholomew came to her later, to say good night. The name had come from somewhere outside the family; she wondered where. When Bartholomew was born, they said it was the day the Huguenots had been slaughtered in France.

"I've brought you Ovaltine," he said.

It made her sleep, or was supposed to, but when he came with tea in the mornings he didn't ask if she had lain awake.

The nights were long. He brought the tea as early as he could.

On Sundays she could no longer manage the journey to church; but messages came from the Oscarey parishioners, prayers were said for her. "O Lord," she imagined Bartholomew pleading on her behalf, "look down from Heaven, and relieve thy servant. . . . Look down upon her with the eyes of thy mercy. . . . Give her comfort and sure confidence in thee." This was the form she preferred; and she knew as she lay in her bed in the stillness of the rectory that these were the words said.

Bartholomew wondered if, afterward, he would want to go away; if, without her, his own misfortune would be a desolation he could not bear. Back to the north side, he thought, which he knew better than the rest of Dublin. There would be employment of some kind: of any kind, he didn't much mind what, provided only that he was capable of whatever it was. He wondered about helping in one of the shops or a bed-and-breakfast house. Middle-aged now, the youths he had worked among might be able at least to find him something, if not employ him. And yet it seemed ridiculous that he should even consider such a dramatic move. He knew he would remain and be silent.

"How tidy it is!" Hester murmured. "Living for your while, then not being there anymore. How well arranged!"

There was contentment in how she put it, and in her tone. Bartholomew sensed that, and, concerned with her again rather than with himself, he was pleased. His deception of her and of his scanty congregations would one day assault his conscience, would one day make continuing impossible, but at least she would not have to know.

When the time came, Hester knew that she would die that night.

Bartholomew was with her. There was no sentiment, she didn't speak, and Bartholomew sensed that there suddenly was only pain. God's will, he knew, was what she repeated to herself, as she had since she'd realized her illness was a visitation that would end only as it was ending now. The intensity of her faith, the sureness of her trust, was unaffected by the pain she suffered, and he prayed that she would close her eyes and die. Yet she did not, and Bartholomew telephoned to request that more morphine should be brought.

"No, I can manage," she whispered, hearing this plea, although he had made it in another room. No doctor was available; a message had had to be left.

"Soon," Hester said, her voice just audible, no more. "It will be soon." She asked for Communion then.

Outside, a frost had stayed all that day and, icing over now, still whitened the small garden, the patch of grass, the fields beyond. Bartholomew stood by the window, watching another dusk becoming dark, wishing there was not now, unknown to her, a gulf between them. Her courage was her belief, a dignity in her need, her eternal life already lit, its stately angels waiting to take her to the mansions of their paradise, and choral voices singing.

When Bartholomew returned to the bedside, she was quiet. Then she spoke incomprehensibly. She winced, her closed eyes tightening, her head jerking on the pillow; and he went again to the telephone. "Please," he begged. "Please." But there was still a message. He said a little more, whispering now, the desperation in his voice concealed. Outside, a blackbird, tame in the garden, scratched at the frost.

"Hester," he said, again beside her, and there was no response; he had not expected one. She would die and still be here and nowhere else; in his dissent he could not escape that. "There will be nothing," he might have said, and wanted to share with her his anguish, as she shared the ordeal of death with him.

"Hester," he murmured.

She turned away, shuddering off a convulsion as best she could, but another came and she was restless. Confused, she tried to sit up, and he eased her back to the pillows. For a moment then her eyes were clear, her contorted features loosened and were calm. Bartholomew knew that pain was taken from her and that she shed, in this first moment of her eternity, her too long, gnawing discontent; that peace, elusive for a lifetime, had come at last.

He reached out for her hand and felt it warm in his.

"Thank you," he thought she said, but knew she had not. He gazed a little longer at the dead features before he drew the sheet up.

He made the telephone calls that were necessary, cancelling the message that requested morphine, informing an undertaker. He tidied the room, clearing away medicine, a cup and saucer.

He sat downstairs, close to the fire, for it was colder now. He remembered days there had been, and Maunder Street, the games they played in the back yard the afternoon Hester took him into the Botanic Gardens, another time to see a band going by in the streets.

Bartholomew watched the fire become embers, not taking anything to eat, disturbed by no one. That night he slept fitfully and woke often, his sister's death entangled in his dreams with his own deprivation. He woke often, and soon after dawn he went to Hester's room.

When he drew down the sheet the moment of calm was still caught in her features. He stayed with her, the mercy of her tranquillity seeming to be a miracle that was real, as it had been in the instant of death. Heaven enough, and more than angels. ♦

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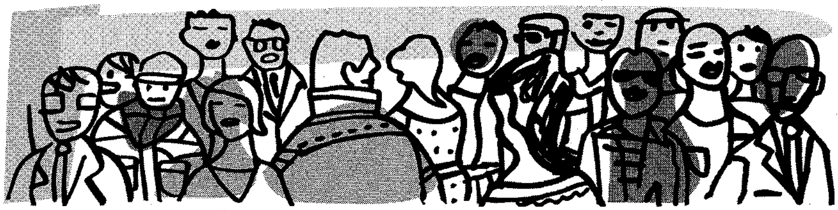


THE CURRENT CINEMA

MEN AT SEA

"Knocked Up" and "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End."

BY ANTHONY LANE

What relation does Judd Apatow's "Knocked Up" bear to his previous movie, "The 40-Year-Old Virgin"? It is not a sequel, though some of the same actors return for second helpings. Nor is it a companion piece, since its research topic has switched from a guy who hasn't had sex but wants it to a guy who *has* had sex but wishes he hadn't. Indeed, since the new film is about the comic, if hardly unprecedented, results of having unprotected sex, let us agree to call it an offshoot.

My suspicion is that Ben Stone (Seth Rogen) changed his name, having started life as Benjamin Flintstone. All the Freddishness is there: the near-maniacal fun-seeking, the bearish bulk that will one day (all too soon) congeal into fat, and the belief that responsibility is a fine and terrible thing. Ben is a La-Z-Boy in human form, who lives with four emotionally stunted losers, better known as friends: Jonah (Jonah Hill), Jason (Jason Segel), Jay (Jay Baruchel), and Martin (Martin Starr). Note the first names, the point being not just that inventing new ones would have been, you know, a total drag but that it presumably allowed Apatow, who wrote as well as directed the film, to let the backchat flow on and off the set like a two-way current. Even if the onscreen range of conversation is confined to the use and abuse of the body, and even though you may recoil at the outcome, Apatow is unquestionably expert at defining people by the particular voltage of their talk, as shown by this quintet of slackers. Having dared Martin not to cut his facial hair, for example, they then spend the rest of the film competing to pinpoint whom he most resembles. "Scorsese on coke" makes way for the climactic "late John Lennon," although the winner has to be "You look like Robin Williams's knuckles."

One night, Ben goes to a bar, picks up a girl, and goes to bed with her. Both are drunk at the time, and both, in consequence, throw up: Ben the next morning ("I just yakked," he says winningly over breakfast), and the girl—who is no girl but a young woman named Alison (Katherine Heigl), with a growing career on television—some weeks later, into a trash can at work. Here comes the bit that will divide Apatow's audience and (he hopes) get them arguing over the movie: Alison decides to inform the father and, little by little, to enfold him and his oafish, froggy grin in the gentle business of parenting. Call it the taming of the Shrek. Most women, I imagine, will scoff with incredulity: this is neither a last hurrah (Alison is still in her twenties) nor the ideal time (she has a good job), and Ben is the last slob on earth she would have chosen. Most men, meanwhile, will be too busy watching through their fingers. To them, this is "The Omen."

Apatow, unlike his hero, is nothing if not careful: born in Syosset, New York, now living in the Los Angeles area, he clearly wants his movies to shock, but not to repel, a conservative audience, and thus the idea of his heroine's aborting the child is no sooner floated than dispelled. Indeed, as with "The 40-Year-Old Virgin," what follows is a morality play dressed up as a filthy piece of mummery. When Ben takes Alison to meet his pals, who are hard at work designing a nudity-in-cinema Web site, Jason welcomes her, or at least her breasts, with the words "Your body's reacting really well to the pregnancy; amazing how quickly the milk arrives." Yet Ben himself is won over, and, as labor begins, it is he, primed with natal information, who asks her, "Have you had your bloody show?" To Jason, that would be just another Web site.

On the surface, Apatow's films are about sex—obsessively, exclusively, and exhaustively. (This one lasts more than two hours.) But that is a clever feint, for their true subject is age. The title of the last film was a giveaway, the dilemma of the Steve Carell character being not that he was a pure maiden but that he remained, in effect, a lonely child. The problem ramifies, and grows unexpectedly touching, in "Knocked Up," which sports a laid-back, honest scene between Ben and his father (Harold Ramis), and any number of acrid exchanges between Alison's older sister Debbie (played by Leslie Mann, the director's wife) and her husband, Pete (Paul Rudd), as they rip themselves apart over their loss of youth. "My life is an unfunny version of 'Everybody Loves Raymond,' " Pete confides. He sneaks off to play fantasy baseball, as if for a lovers' tryst, while Debbie and Alison try in vain to get into a night club, provoking, out of nowhere, a devastating speech from the doorman, who points out that one of them is pregnant and the other too old. For the record, he also informs them that he, a black man, is forbidden to let the ratio of black customers rise above five per cent.

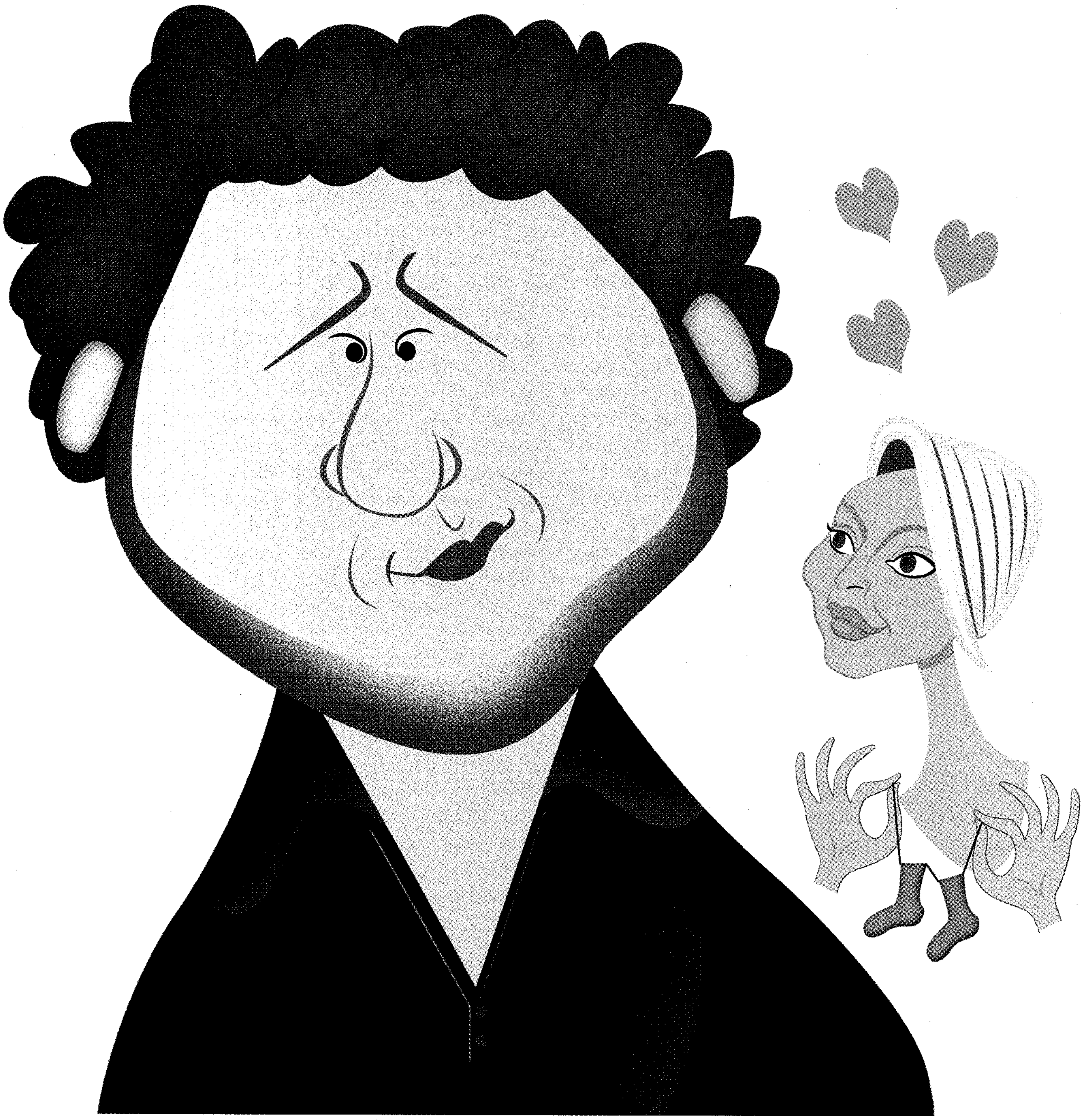
At times like that, Apatow is within reach of real bitterness, and he may yet make films that kick at the fences erected by society. For the moment, however, he is too easily tempted by erections of other kinds, and, to be fair, one would hardly wish him to spoil the fondness with which he views his characters. Rather than spiting them, he gets other people to laugh at them—hence the dangerous ease with which those in minor roles come to colonize his movies, often bearing a quiver of one-liners to which the hero and heroine have no response. Seth Rogen is unceasingly lik-

ROBERT RISKO

able as Ben, and the puerility of the tale, which would otherwise pall for anyone over the mental age of fifteen, is somehow redeemed by his tolerant sweetness, yet I prefer his supporting turn in "The 40-Year-Old Virgin," where he fired barbs from the fringes of the action, to his prominence here. Thank goodness that the sublime narrowness of his cultural references holds firm: "If any of us get laid tonight, it's because of Eric Bana in 'Munich,' " he tells his drinking buddies, which is almost as stirring as his Olivier-like exhortation to Steve Carell, on the brink of a pickup—"Be David Caruso in 'Jade.' "

"The 40-Year-Old Virgin" closed with a deflowering, as expected, but also with a kitsch rendition of "Aquarius" by the assembled cast, half-mocking its hero's newfound ethereal contentment. "Knocked Up" is more pleased with itself, and I suppose that, with a baby due, there is no way it was ever going to avoid a sentimental splurge, familiar from other birthing films like "Nine Months" and "Parenthood." The likelihood of Apatow's turning into Chris Columbus or Ron Howard, however, seems refreshingly slight. Besides, he has a job to do: there are women out there who badly need men to grow up, and the men really don't want to, so who will referee?

The best performance in "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End" comes from a monkey. He belongs to the jaunty Captain Barbossa (Geoffrey Rush), and, given that in the course of the film he is required to ignite a rocket, freeze his fur off, dangle from a para-



Seth Rogen and Katherine Heigl in the new movie from Judd Apatow, the director of "The 40-Year-Old Virgin."

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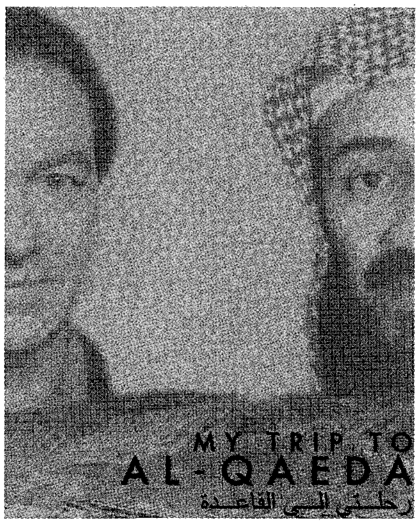

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chute, and, most ignominiously, take the place of a cannonball, he—or his agent—may well have requested that half his scenes be played by a stunt monkey, or at least a monkey double. On the night I saw the film, he also earned the most laughs, putting more experienced actors to shame. In short, the only person who could derive lasting satisfaction from this movie is Charles Darwin.

It is the third in the series, the first and most engaging film having been spun off from a theme ride at Disneyland. The second, though blessed with pleasing inventions, was a more ponderous affair, but the memory of it is like rarest gossamer compared with the third, which takes a hundred and sixty-seven minutes to pummel us into submission. Advice to Johnny Depp fans: enjoy a seafood dinner, skip the beginning, and roll up after half an hour. You won't have missed a thing. It takes that long for his character, Captain Jack Sparrow, to flounce into view. Jack is marooned in Davy Jones's locker—or, as we like to say in the overworld, "dead"—and it falls to Barbossa, aided by Elizabeth Swann (Keira Knightley) and Will Turner (Orlando Bloom), to fetch him back. This means sailing through polar ice floes, plunging over a waterfall, and winding up on a barren strand; or, if you are the director, Gore Verbinski, it means putting your blockbustering on hold while you try your hand at an art movie. Not a good idea.

Thus we get Jack's vessel stuck in a blinding salt desert, with stones that turn into crabs, and not one Johnny Depp but a whole shipful of them, who swarm around like the Oompa-Loompas in "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory." Whether Jack is hallucinating or splitting his personality (neither of which one normally associates with the afterlife) I cannot say, but the result is a multimillion-dollar retread of Buñuel's "Simon of the Desert," without a scrap of Buñuel's coruscation. There is no denying the ability of Verbinski's production designers to conjure credible textures—slime, steam, and desiccation play their part, with a group of characters emerging from dark, unctuous waters like Martin Sheen in "Apocalypse Now"—but, when the beat of the story varies so wildly, those finely worked surfaces lose all power of suggestion, and the film descends into an indiscriminate soup.

Apart from a Singapore-based pirate named Sao Feng (Chow Yun-Fat), most of the figures here will be familiar: Davy Jones himself (Bill Nighy), the starchy Lord Beckett (Tom Hollander), and Will's late father, Bootstrap Bill (Stellan Skarsgard), who more than ever strikes me as half man, half bouillabaisse. A subplot requires Will to save Bill by getting hold of the Black Pearl, but for the life of me I couldn't remember whether the Pearl was a man-of-war, a precious stone, or a sex toy—or, for that matter, whose heart was in the treasure chest, and which sailor, at any given moment, was on board which damn ship. At the climax, two vessels get their rigging entwined on the rim of a whirlpool, which sounds impressive, but give me a hot bath, an open plughole, and a pair of rubber ducks and I could have laid out the situation more efficiently. As "Spider-Man 3" has proved, rumpus minus cohesion equals mess. The people making these sequels are so drenched in the saga that they commit the fatal error of presuming that we are in the same boat—that we have spotless recall of every twist in the earlier films and can barely breathe because of our desperation for more. What they fail to realize is that big summer movies, even the successful ones, are designed to be forgettable, passing through our system at precisely the same rate as a pint of Pepsi. Nothing is left but fizzing nerve ends and a sugary soupçon of rot.

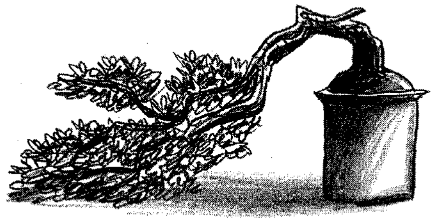
At one point in "Pirates of the Caribbean: At Wits' End," as it must surely come to be known, a sailor asks of Jack, "Do you think he plans it out, or just makes it all up as he goes along?" This is a false distinction. Even Depp's ad-libs now have a prepackaged air, and, whatever the reserves of ingenuity and cash that were poured into the movie, it tends to founder when decisiveness is called for—not unlike Lord Beckett, struck dumb as his ship is torn by cannon fire from both sides. The sight of him stepping down off the poop deck, with the world blowing to splinters around him, is beautifully done, and his lordship, like many of those present, looks content to be rid of the absurdities that have reduced the "Pirates" franchise from jollity to wreck. The theme ride is now a ride without a theme. "Gentlemen, I wash my hands of this weirdness," Captain Jack says. Sir, you speak for us all. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Lies, *by Enrique de Hériz, translated from the Spanish by John Cullen (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday; $26).* After a boating accident in a Guatemalan backwater, Isabel, a Spanish anthropologist researching indigenous funeral rites, finds that one of the victims has been misidentified as her. She is strangely reluctant to return to her grieving children and husband in Barcelona, and her subterfuge turns out to be only the most recent instance of a family penchant for self-invention. De Hériz's chapters cut between Isabel's hallucinatory diary entries and her daughter's account of how she and her two brothers go about the business of mourning. The vivid, deadpan pacing recalls the films of Pedro Almodóvar.

Ghostwalk, *by Rebecca Stott (Spiegel & Grau; $24.95).* Drawing on alchemy, neurology, animal-rights activism, and supernatural visitations, this début novel is an ambitious, learned thriller. A Cambridge historian dies under suspicious circumstances, leaving behind the nearly completed manuscript of a book on the alchemical experiments of Isaac Newton. Her son, a research scientist, hires his former lover, Lydia, to finish the book. Meanwhile, a shadowy group of animal-rights activists escalate their violent attacks. As Lydia is drawn further into Newton's seventeenth-century world, she begins to believe that his ghost is haunting her and, perhaps, directing the murderous events of the present. Stott, a historian of science, deploys her research effortlessly and demonstrates great attention to detail, but the proliferation of themes means that none are explored in much depth.

Reclaiming History, *by Vincent Bugliosi (Norton; $49.95).* This weighty book (its pages number sixteen hundred and twelve) claims to be the final word on the assassination of President Kennedy. It is as if Bugliosi, who prosecuted the Manson murders, intended to overwhelm with sheer, footnoted bulk. But in the way that others have "proved" conspiracies, Bugliosi "proves" yet again the guilt of Lee Harvey Oswald. He does this by reëxamining familiar evidence but also by dismissing preposterous theories, such as one that J. Edgar Hoover masterminded the murder to keep his job. Bugliosi steps less certainly in considering the work of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, which, in 1978, concluded that J.F.K. was "probably" killed as the result of a plot. Citing a National Research Council study, Bugliosi brushes aside the committee's acoustic evidence suggesting that four shots were fired in Dallas (a fourth shot would confirm a second gunman); he is uncomfortable with a subsequent analysis, by the British Forensic Science Society, which challenged the N.R.C. opinion. Mysteries are like that.



Chance and Circumstance, *by Carolyn Brown (Knopf; $37.50).* Carolyn Brown's clear-eyed, unsentimental memoir of twenty years as a principal dancer with Merce Cunningham's company is something rare—an eyewitness account of an artistic revolution. She joined the company in 1953, the year it was formed, at Black Mountain College. Its survival over the next decade was always in doubt. Financial crises, mostly hostile audiences, withering reviews (or none at all), and Cunningham's inability to communicate with the dancers on a personal level incited a kind of joyful defiance among those who stayed. They believed in the new aesthetic of movement that was being hammered out by Cunningham and his irrepressible ally the composer John Cage; their reward was the work, which required all they could give to it. After the tide finally turned, with the company's triumphant week of performances at Sadler's Wells, in London, in 1964, a sadness invades Brown's narrative. She missed the old days, when "life and art were one, no separation."

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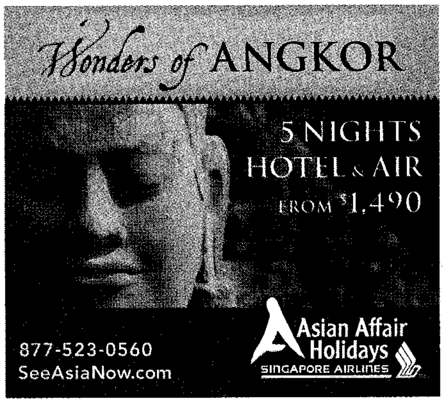

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BOOKS

THE AESTHETE

The novel and Michael Ondaatje.

BY LOUIS MENAND

Michael Ondaatje's new novel, "Divisadero" (Knopf; $25), is named for a street in San Francisco where one of the book's characters, Anna, once lived. None of the action takes place there, and the street is mentioned only twice, in passing. Ondaatje was asked recently why he chose the title. "It suggests division, and the concept of looking at something from afar, the way the writer Anna does," he explained. "It is a book of separations and divisions, of two stories that link up." This is not entirely helpful, but it does give a hint about how Ondaatje writes his novels and how he wants them to be read. He is not telling stories; he is using the elements of storytelling to gesture in the direction of a constellation of moods, themes, and images. He is creating the literary equivalent of a Cornell box or a rock garden or a floral arrangement.

How fruitful is Ondaatje's approach to fiction?

PATRICK LONG

Ondaatje is an enemy of the linear. He has called his novels "Cubist," and we are almost commanded not to try to iron out the kinks. It's not easy to extract a continuous narrative from his books, anyway, because events bounce around chronologically, styles and points of view shift, and there are gaps and stray threads. When we first leave the character Anna, for example, she is a teen-age runaway; when she reappears, she is a scholar of French literature with a degree from Berkeley (and a place on Divisadero). There are many missing rungs on that ladder, and it is the same with all the characters in "Divisadero." Anna has two near-siblings: Claire, an adopted sister who is the same age, and Coop, an adopted brother who is four years older. Anna's mother died in childbirth, as did Claire's; Coop's family was murdered by a hired hand while he hid under the floorboards. They are brought up on a farm near Petaluma, California, in the nineteen-seventies. When Anna is sixteen, she becomes sexually involved with Coop; her father discovers them, beats Coop nearly to death, and drives off with Anna. Anna escapes from her father, but she never sees Coop or Claire again. Coop becomes a cardsharp; Claire works in the San Francisco Public Defender's Office, runs into Coop fortuitously in Tahoe, and ends up taking care of him after a beating at the hands of other gamblers leaves him without a memory.

That's the first part of the novel. The second part, the "linked" story, concerns a writer named Lucien Segura, who is born in the South of France in the nineteenth century, and who writes a series of popular fictions in a style inspired by Dumas and with characters inspired by a woman he once loved, called Marie-Neige, and her husband, Roman. These two stories intersect at a single point: Anna goes to France to research the life of Segura and becomes involved with a local man, Rafael, who once knew him. We are apparently meant to regard the second half of the novel, in which Segura's complicated life story in the countryside of southern France is recounted in dreamy, episodic form, as something composed by Anna, or told as she would have told it, and to find it colored by her obsession with her own family history in Northern California at the end of the twentieth century. "For we live with those retrievals from childhood that coalesce and echo throughout our lives, the way shattered pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope reappear in new forms and are songlike in their refrains and rhymes, making up a single monologue," Anna informs us. "We live permanently in the recurrence of our own stories, whatever story we tell." This is pretty plainly Ondaatje speaking; it also seems to be a warning that finding the patterns is going to be up to us.

There is a method of story writing that involves stripping the tale of every extraneous detail *plus one*, so that the non-extraneous bit becomes, in the reader's imagination, the piece that might explain everything. It's a formula for ambiguity. Kipling was expert at this; so was Hemingway. But ambiguity is virtually integral to literary expression—ambiguity, uncertainty, indeterminacy are ways that fictional texts mean what they mean. Ondaatje is doing something else. He is trying to change the medium.

Ondaatje was born in 1943, into a prominent Sri Lankan family. (He has written a memoir of his relatives, "Running in the Family," published in 1982.) His parents divorced (his father, at least in the account offered in the memoir, was a hopeless binge drinker), and when he was eleven he joined his mother in England. He was educated there and, after moving to Canada, in 1962, at the University of Toronto. In 1970, he published "The Collected Works of Billy the Kid," a kind of album of prose, poetry, and pictures that captured, starkly and effectively, the offhand violence, desolation, and dementia of the American West. "Wild started to yell to tell Garrett though and Tom killed him at once. Garrett fired at O'Folliard's flash and took his shoulder off. Tom O'Folliard screaming out onto the quiet Fort Sumner street, Christmas night, walking over to Garrett, no shoulder left, his jaws tilting up and down like mad bladders going. Too mad to even aim at Garrett. Son of a bitch son of a bitch, as Garrett took clear aim and blew him out." This was followed, in 1976, by the similarly eclectic and spooky "Coming Through Slaughter," based on the life of a turn-of-the-century New Orleans cornet player named Buddy Bolden. Both books involved fairly extensive research: they were fantasies spun from facts, efforts to get on the inside of craziness. (Bolden spent the last twenty-four years of his life in an asylum.)

Those books were almost ostentatiously experimental, and the early nineteen-seventies was a time for fictional experiment. One model was Donald Barthelme, who mixed styles and media in the collections "Come Back, Dr. Caligari" (1964), "Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts" (1968), and "City Life" (1970) and in the novel "Snow White" (1967). Another was William Gass. Gass's "In the Heart of the Heart of the Country" (1968) is a collection of oblique, quasi-poetic takes on life in the rural Midwest; "Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife" (1968) is an adventure (with photographs of a naked woman) in form and typography. Barthelme's and Gass's work may have looked avant-garde to the same degree, and they were similarly self-referential. But they stood at opposite poles. Barthelme was a collagist, a satirist, and a pasticheur; he played with texts and images in the spirit of the painting and sculpture of the late nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-sixties, the spirit of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. The intention was subversive *détournement*. Gass's intention was the opposite: he was trying to unlock the aesthetic potential of language. For Barthelme, "the aesthetic potential of language" was just one more concept to have fun with; for Gass, it was a solace for the emptiness of existence. There may have been many influences on Ondaatje's early writing, but he is, self-consciously or not, of the school of Gass. His Billy the Kid and Buddy Bolden make art (if we can call gunslinging an art) to defend themselves against depression and paranoia. A line from Nietzsche appears twice in "Divisadero": "We have art so that we shall not be destroyed by the truth." The sentiment is pure Gass.

When Ondaatje undertook his first full-dress novel, "In the Skin of a Lion," published in 1987, he therefore proceeded by spinning a series of image-driven vignettes out of his imagination and then arranging them in formal patterns that maintained only a loose sense of obligation to the requirements of continuity and closure. "I write very freely, but then do a lot of rewriting to alter it, change it, dip it into other colors," he has said. And, "I don't really begin a novel, or any kind of book, with any sure sense of what's happening or even what's going to happen." "In the Skin of a Lion" turned out to be the prequel to "The English Patient," the novel that made Ondaatje famous. "The English Patient," which reprises some of the characters of the earlier book, was published in 1992. It was a co-winner of the Booker Prize and was adapted for the screen by Anthony Minghella. The movie came out in 1996 and was nominated for twelve Academy Awards, winning nine, including best picture. The movie is a good deal more conventionally theatrical than the novel, which is more interested in the somewhat overpopulated ménage in the Italian villa that includes the nurse Hana, the Indian sapper Kip, the thief Caravaggio, and the dying patient than it is in the part of the story that everyone remembers from the movie—the doomed love affair between the melancholy, dashing Hungarian Count Almásy and the nubile Katharine. The book is filled with arcana about desert mapmaking and bomb defusing that the movie can, with some relief, dispense with. Minghella turned the book into something Ondaatje programmatically resisted: a story driven by a plot and equipped with an ending. (Ondaatje has expressed admiration for the adaptation.)

"The English Patient" is a book that resists becoming a romance. "Anil's Ghost" (2000) is a book that resists becoming a thriller. It's the story of a woman who, trained as a forensic anthropologist, returns to Sri Lanka, where she was born, in order to investigate deaths in a period of civil violence. She finds herself on the trail of a killing in which the government may have had a hand, and is possibly in danger herself, but the book, characteristically, wanders off in many directions, ending with a long description of a man performing a complicated ritual involving painting the eyes on a statue of the Buddha. We learn (also characteristically) a lot about forensics—a difficult and recondite occupation that stands in, as such work always does for Ondaatje, for the art of writing. The aestheticization of work is an almost obsessive feature of his stories, and danger is part of the aesthetic; his fictional world is populated by steeplejacks, extreme explorers, professional gamblers, sappers, and thieves. From "In the Skin of a Lion," about the construction of a bridge: "Nicholas Temelcoff is famous on the bridge, a daredevil. He is given all the difficult jobs and he takes them. He descends into the air with no fear. He is a solitary. He assembles ropes, brushes the tackle and pulley at his waist, and falls off the bridge like a diver over the edge of a boat." Like the writer spinning words around an image in his head? It is as though Ondaatje wished to identify his own labor with his characters'—not literally, as a risk to life, but existentially, as an absorption in difficulty for its own sake, a distraction from the void.

How fruitful is this approach to fiction? Ondaatje has described the composition of "Divisadero" in familiar terms: "Beginning with almost nothing but a couple of stray images and then seeing where they led. A wild horse in a barn. A 'family' that after it is shattered by an incident splits up and disappears from each other. I do not have a plan in mind before I begin but I follow those small clues—so the shaping and editing that comes much later, after the story has been found and fulfilled, cuts it down, shapes it, tightens it, makes sense of it." Imaginations work in different ways, and pulling an image out of the air and seeing what it leads to must be, inherently, no less promising

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amid the saliva. The daily rags speak
of a dirty bomb. The government tells me live
in a wooden house with a hurricane lamp,
a gas mask, and flares, while it arms
an impervious underground temple from which
it can map the surface, choose a site
anywhere on the globe, and call down the rain.

—*Marvin Bell*

than some other mode of attack—storyboarding or writing ideas down on index cards. But Ondaatje's novels read exactly as they were written—as a sequence of highly imaginative, somewhat preciously poetic set pieces. He makes a point of leaving some discontinuities and detours in place. The mode of composition becomes the meaning of the book.

The sacrifice of plot is tolerable, and, despite the willful digressions, traces of plot and even suspense are usually there in Ondaatje's fiction. What is damaging is the sacrifice of character. His characters are ciphers. We have no affective connection with them. Their stories are too spare, and most of them are impossibly wan figures who seem to be floating outside of time—even in "The English Patient," which treats the Second World War simply as the occasion for bringing exotic people together in threatening circumstances. The threat is there only to charge the atmosphere. But the strongest, the most entertaining part of "The English Patient" is, in fact, the conventional love story of Katharine and Almásy, just as the strongest part of "Anil's Ghost" is the conventional mystery story of Anil and the twice-buried corpse.

The best parts of "Divisadero" are those which involve Coop and the gamblers. The language is colloquial and hard-boiled—not Elmore Leonard, exactly, but refreshingly unperfumed. "The Deadhead, or hippie, would be the one true ally Cooper found when he arrived at Tahoe. And the thing about 'the hippie' was that he seemed the healthiest person in the casino." Raymond Chandler could have written that. Chandler could not have written, "We have been following the river, so that now we must look on the road as a stranger. The depth of water is about twelve inches, more when the spring storms come racing at low level over the fields and leap into the trees so nests capsize and there is the crack of old branches and then silence before each plummets in their fall. The forest, Rafael says, always so full of revival and farewell." Maybe French peasants talk that way, but it sounds a lot like literature.

Many readers respond to Ondaatje's anti-novelistic aesthetic. But it is frustrating to read continually against the grain of expectations, and it is even a little annoying to be expected to pick out the patterns in the metaphors, to be obliged to trust that there *are* patterns, while the author looks on silently. "The novel has been quite slow in picking up what the other arts are doing," Ondaatje has said. "For years they have been doing things that are much more suggestive, much freer of chronological sequence." The impulse to experiment is worthy; one wants it to yield more than suggestion. ♦

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THE ART WORLD

PAINTINGS FOR NOW

Neo Rauch at the Met.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Abounding critical and commercial success has earned Neo Rauch a solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum, of fourteen typically virtuosic and befuddling paintings, all made this year. Rauch may be barely known outside the art world, but fame is increasingly superfluous to the establishment of an artist's sinecure. Insider buzz and sales to collectors of the right pedigree are what count. An influential teacher as well as painter, Rauch is the champion of a fertile scene in Leipzig—long an arts center—in the former East Germany. (In Germany, unlike here, teaching is a prized role of art stars.) He was born in Leipzig in 1960. When he was a few weeks old, his parents died in a train wreck, and he was raised by his maternal grandparents. He studied under the tottering academic regime of Socialist Realism, which lingers in his work's frequent suggestions of foul utopias peopled by smooth-browed heroes, laced with Surrealist uncanniness, and given Pop éclat. Aspects of his style bring to mind Goya, Beckmann, Balthus, and Magritte, as well as, in trace amounts, Jörg Immendorff and other West German neo-expressionists who affected him in the nineteen-eighties. He is a homebody, living with his wife and teen-age son in Leipzig, and bicycling six miles each weekday morning to his studio, in an old cotton mill. He teaches two days a week. On weekends, he gardens. His pictures feature structures and interiors familiar from his childhood: in his words, "kitchens, barracks, workshops, and nurseries." With no prior planning, he starts and develops his complex compositions on canvas. He told an interviewer, "I understand myself to be a director of plays." The plays, such as they are, emerge in the process.

Rauch has also said that his subjects often derive from his dreams, and that the recurrent character types—sensitive young man, bearded older man, chunky young woman, and proletarian, military, or fire-brigade squad—all represent him. Their behavior stymies interpretation, and even curiosity. It can appear not to interest the artist himself very much. Three men in crimson riding jackets, backstage at a theatre, dominate the big, panoramic "Para." One sits at a piano, perhaps composing. The second—huge and bending over, it seems, to fit into the picture—peers at the third, who stands next to a woman in blue, seated with a cello, and parts mustard-colored curtains, as if to check the house. A rustic table in the foreground supports indistinct CD cases (a visitor to Rauch's studio in 2005 noticed piles of up-to-date pop music, such as the White Stripes) and, on an anvil, a little hammer and a small red dragon with yellow and green wings. The red-lettered word "PARA" floats above. In terms of narrative content, the work is maddeningly coy—unless you fancy Jungian woolgathering about archetypes and suchlike—but it is so well designed and painted that, once you have started looking, resistance gives way.

Rauch has titled the entire show "Para." The curator, Gary Tinterow, the Met's chief of modern and contemporary art, writes in the catalogue that he believes the artist "hopes to set in motion a string of associations with the prefix: paranormal, parallel, paradox, and so on." "Paradox" seems wrong, for want of any apparent doxa to contradict, and so does the idea of a response "set in motion." Rauch's stories don't come from or go anywhere, as far as I can tell. Every association—in the painting "Para," to hunting, music, theatre, and magic—is a cul-de-sac: arriving at it, you must return by the route you took. Rauch's hermeticism is most daunting when his scenes are most nearly naturalistic. Four figures with crossbows inhabit "Jagdzimmer" ("Hunter's Room"). One young man lights another's cigarette; a bearded man gestures strangely; and a woman pokes at a dead bird on a table. Their poses have the charged solemnity of Balthus, without the erotic crackle. Nothing seems to be at issue for them. (The bird is beyond caring.) But masterly areas of the painting, astonishingly varied in style, captivate. Rauch tends to use oils as if they were poster paints, flatly—often scumbling, rather than glazing or blending, to modulate tones and colors. The result is a surreptitious richness. The rhetorical potency of oils—sensuous texture, light-drinking color, infinite suggestiveness—strains at a short, taut leash. The constrictive effect strikes me as perverse, but it is certainly original. It also anchors Rauch's importance as an artist of and for the historical imbroglio of art today.

Collectors are tumbling over one another to rate contemporary art higher and higher, in a frenzy that feels religious—the market as a medieval cathedral under construction, whose consumption of resources declares the priority of immaterial belief over practical needs. Inflated financially and, through booming institutions, socially, art may never have been more esteemed while meaning less. Rauch's production of handsome, stony symbols of something both momentous and ungraspable happens, by a chance that resembles fate, to mirror the crisis. A bard of Eastern Europe, rooted in the obsolete future of revolutionary hopes, he deploys a deadpan satirical tone of majestic confidence with no conceivable basis in fact. His attitude is profoundly conservative, though not reactionary, if only because it doesn't countenance anything to react against. Rauch's redolences of Socialist Realism are like a dead-virus vaccine: a virulence deprived of its power to sicken and, thereby, forfending sickness. Violence and danger there may be. People are prone to madness. In "Vorort" ("Suburb"), men in a street burn flags of indeterminate nationality. A sinister, old-fashioned aerial bomb lies nearby. But a yellowish cast of sunset light combines with the yellow of flames to invest the scene with the dreaminess of a fairyland comedy. The situation is grave, but not serious. Rauch's work provides a cultural moment that seeks legitimacy in art with talismans of rhapsodic complacency.

The surprise is that worry-proof conservatism can generate real artistic force. It does so, in Rauch's art, by finding opportunities, in trumped-up fantasy, for recovering traditional aesthetic capacities

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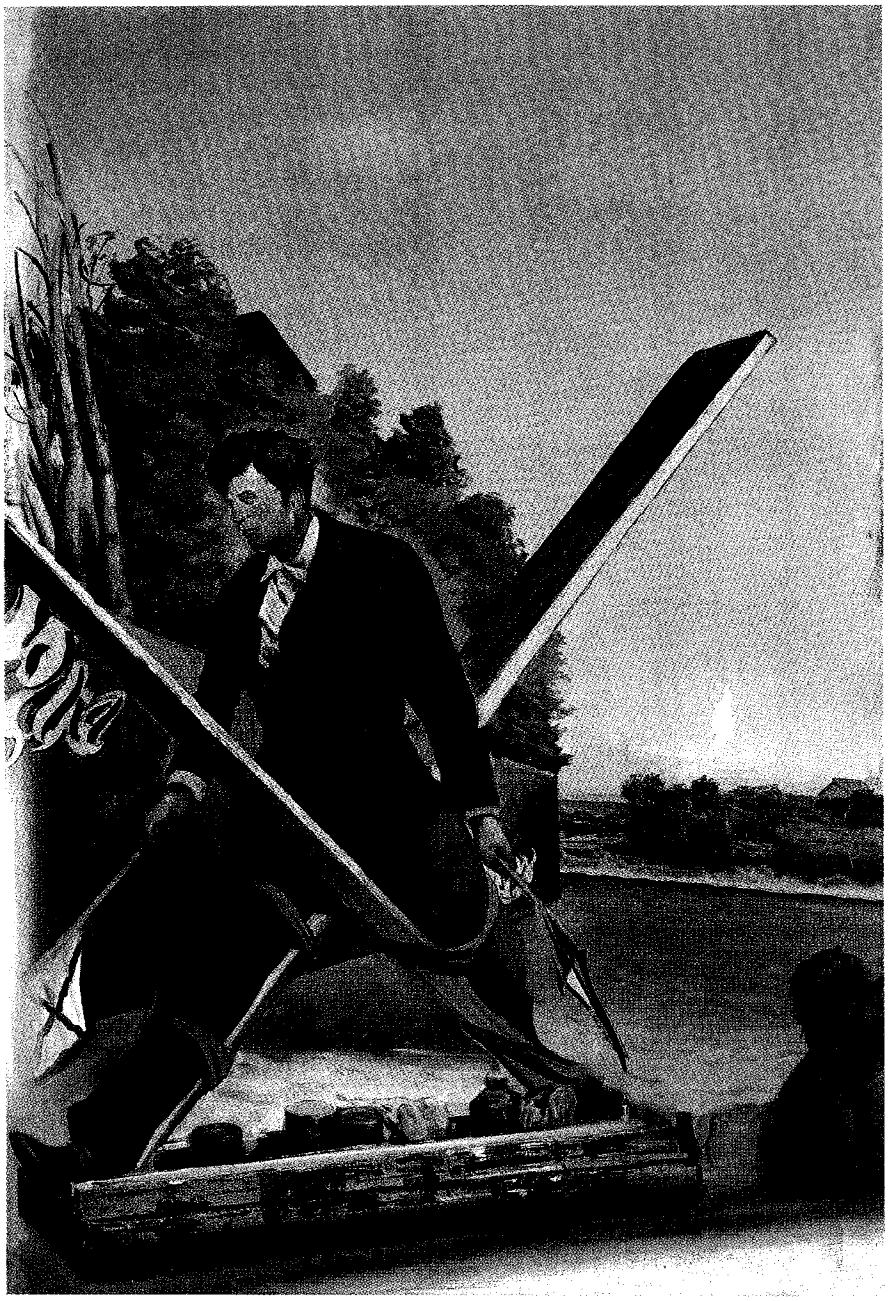


"Die Flamme" (2007): Rauch's work conveys a vision of futility as destiny.

of painting. Having nothing to say, he says it ever more marvellously. Tinterow helps us gauge one signal quality by extending the show into a room of the Met's permanent collection which contains pictures by such stalwarts of painterly expressiveness as Lucian Freud, Alice Neel, Leon Kossoff, and Georg Baselitz. The collegial affinity alerts the eye to almost subliminal wonders of brushwork in Rauch's stolid mise en scène. He could do anything that those artists do, the comparisons imply, were he not committed to more important tasks, such as, in "Die Fuge" ("The Fugue," or "The Gap"), reporting the event of a bearded man emerging with a chain from a heaved fissure in the earth, while what appear to be firemen labor obscurely, a man and two women (or half women, merging with each other) levitate next to a brick shed that bears bubble-lettered graffiti, a mountain looms—and that's far from all. Epic and ridiculous, the tableau wields its felicities with a comical lightness, as of throwaway witticisms. My attention to the picture finally focussed, with pleasure, on a marginal passage of still-life: an unidentifiable animal part in a dish rests on a fish atop a book on a cloth on a table. The detail constitutes a lovely oddball painting in itself.

Come to that, still-life seems to be Rauch's lurking, fundamental genre. His people are objects. He arranges them. Everything, including snatches of abstract design or facture, feels imported from somewhere and put in place, where it stays. In "Der Nächste Zug" ("The Next Move," or "The Next Draw"), cigarette smoke, blue-gray on a black ground, doesn't rise or drift; it locks down into a calligraphic abstraction of a vaguely nineteen-forties, European sort. Not that noticing the stylistic echo profits a viewer anything. The more observant you are of erudite allusions in the show (some male figures display particular airs and dress styles of nineteenth-century German Romanticism), the more acute will be your frustration in trying to make sense of it all. If Rauch's work is nightmarish, as some critics have asserted, the effect pertains not to its dramas but to their mockery of understanding. They are not mysterious, because mysteries imply solutions. Rather, they convey that we may know plenty but our knowledge is useless. There is a highly contemporary sting in this. Today, we are flooded with accurate information—letting us confidently judge the failures and iniquities of political leaders, for instance—and we naturally feel that such clarity must influence events, but it only amplifies our dismay as the world careers from one readily foreseeable disaster to another. Rauch sets us an example of getting used to it.

Conservatism takes grim, or not so grim, satisfaction in demonstrations of human folly. It has a major pictorial philosopher in Rauch, who calmly implicates himself, and art, in a vision of futility as destiny. "Die Flamme," which seems quite explicitly a metaphorical self-portrait, presents a riding-jacketed man, in a landscape, striding the length of a long wooden box of painting materials. He carries semaphorelike flags. His legs are lashed to planks that extend upward to form an X. The flame of the title is a pale flare in the sky, over the distant horizon. The image might be read as an allegory of inspiration contingent on an acceptance of grotesque handicaps. Or it might not. But I think I've never seen an excellent painting that is so masochistically cheerless, to the point of revelling in a contemplation of impotence. I would like to despise the artist for this, but his visual poetry is too persuasive. Present-day reality is a lot more like one of his pictures than I wish it were. ♦

JAZZ

AUTUMN IN NEW YORK

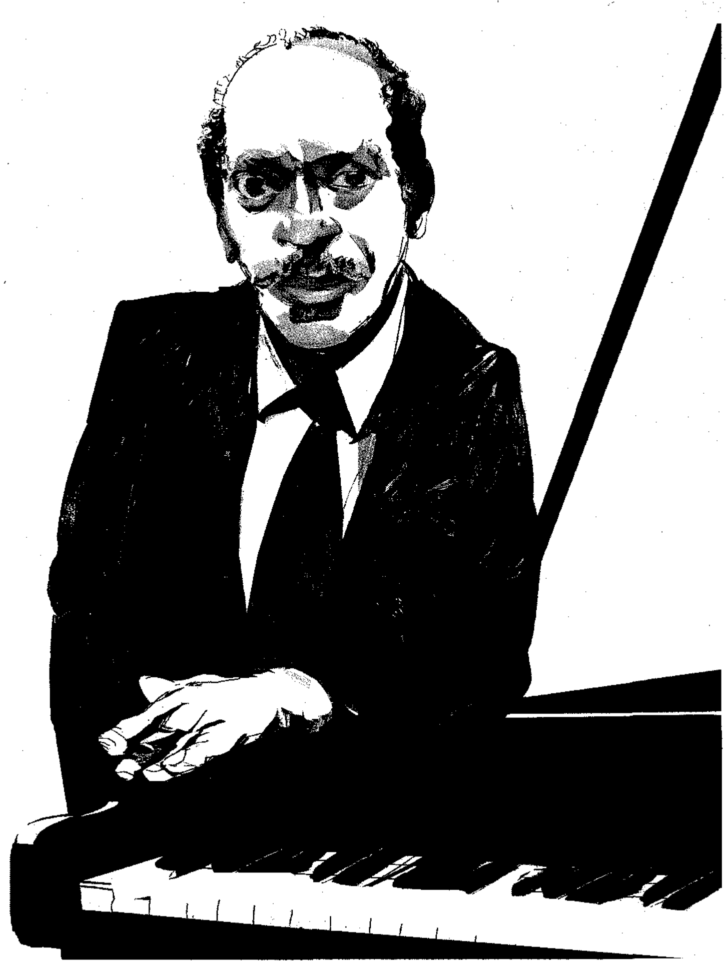
Hank Jones's late-flowering mastery.

BY GARY GIDDINS

In mid-May, Hank Jones, slim and dapper, accepted a hand-up to the stage at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola and approached the piano with regal but nimble bearing. His first chords, close and luminous, were reassuring, and, in the circumstances, this was welcome. Jones had initially been scheduled to play three nights of duets with the saxophonist Joe Lovano, but shortly before the event they announced that Jones would limit himself to half a set, with Lovano's nonet rounding out the hour. Eleven weeks earlier, Jones had undergone a quadruple bypass after a massive heart attack. No big deal, according to Jones, who remarked, before going on, that performing helps him maintain muscular control in his hands and arms. In July, he will celebrate his eighty-ninth birthday.

Jones is perhaps the most venerated of contemporary jazz pianists, and not just because he has outlived so much of the competition. Jazz taste oscillates between decorum and expression, usually favoring the latter. In the years when jazz piano was dominated by obdurate, percussive modernists like Thelonious Monk and Cecil Taylor, Jones was often perceived as a genteel professional, and admired more for the reliability of his technique than for his wit. In today's more ecumenical musical climate, in which pianists like Bill Charlap and Jason Moran tend to mediate percussive dynamics with lyricism, Jones's approach seems almost prophetic.

In truth, Jones's playing isn't all that genteel: mannerly, yes, but at the core resolute and spare. As his most intricate phrases skitter over the keyboard, he barely seems to depress the keys, yet each note is cleanly articulated. His touch has always been unmistakable, but it has never felt quite as personal as in recent years, and his sound has taken on a soft, steady glow, like a candle with a small wick. His variations burn with infallible confidence and precision, and he can afford to hold much of his technique in reserve. Although many sides that Jones cut with Charlie Parker, Cannonball Adderley, and Ella Fitzgerald during the forties and fifties are rightly regarded as landmarks, his most bewitching performances have emerged during the past decade and a half.



Jones's touch, always unmistakable, has assumed a new level of intimacy.

RICCARDO VECCHIO

Jones's extraordinarily supple time—the rhythmic sensibility that generates swing and equilibrium—reflects his apprenticeship. He began performing near his home, in Pontiac, Michigan, at the age of thirteen, in 1931, a time when jazz piano was by no means a settled practice. In the twenties, ragtime habits had given way to the free-spirited, resilient rhythms of the Harlem stride masters, chiefly James P. Johnson and Fats Waller, and their style was given further impetus by the improvisational bravura of Earl Hines. Jones chose Hines and Waller as models, and soon added the most adventurous pianists of the early thirties: Teddy Wilson and Art Tatum. Tatum, whose virtuosity galvanized a generation of musicians in and out of jazz, told Jones that everyone makes mistakes, but that quick resolutions cover them up. Jones didn't believe that Tatum really made mistakes, and he doesn't make many, either; the economy of his style, for all the polish and cunning, is too transparent to allow them.

In 1944, Jones came to New York. Within months, he was working with the jazz élite. He was also soaking up innovations of the new jazz, called bebop, pioneered by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. Few established swing stars could make the leap into its harmonic complexity and rhythmic volatility, but Jones grasped it immediately. He didn't trade in his old style but, rather, modified what he already knew. By the mid-fifties, he had developed an ingenuity that appealed to musicians but escaped the notice of many fans and critics. Its defining characteristic is an aversion to cliché. He is fond of transforming material usually neglected by jazz improvisers, from

"We Shall Overcome" to one of his longtime signature pieces, a melancholy meditation on "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'." When playing well-worn standards, like "My Funny Valentine," he recharges them with substitute chords and melodic inversions. His improvisations start on familiar ground, flirt with the listener's expectations, and then lead somewhere entirely unanticipated. In a recent recording of "The Shadow of Your Smile," he undermines the expected Latin rhythm, ends the theme with a sudden discord, and, in the course of his improvisation, nods at other tunes—"Pretty Baby," "Volga Boatmen," "Hot House"—without quite acknowledging them. These are not the standard jazz quotations, jimmied into a solo, but ideas weighed, rejected, and alchemized.

From the late fifties into the seventies, Jones was on the staff of CBS, appearing on "The Ed Sullivan Show" and many other programs. He made good money and was in the vanguard of integration at the networks, but, musically, he slipped from view. Then, in 1976, he started making up for lost time. Within two years, there were eight new albums, and the tide has yet to ebb. In 1978, he appeared on Broadway as the onstage pianist in the Fats Waller revue "Ain't Misbehavin'," and he later recorded an album, "Handful of Keys," that subjects Waller's antic themes to ruminative treatments. Jones's versatility has given rise to a fascinating spread of collaborations with other artists. He seems equally comfortable recording a hushed, prayerful album of hymns and spirituals with the bassist Charlie Haden ("Steal Away") and playing alongside the West African musician Cheick-Tidiane Seck ("Sarala"), whose sound-world, rife with overblown flute and exotic percussion, spurs Jones to invent rhythmic aphorisms and so uncover another facet of his art. He has also recorded with his youngest brother, Elvin, who radicalized jazz percussion as a member of the John Coltrane Quartet and might therefore seem to be the opposite of his brother. But Jones negotiates Elvin's pounding polyrhythms with equanimity, especially on the album "Upon Reflection: The Music of Thad Jones." Thad, the middle brother, was a trumpet player, composer, and bandleader who revived big-band music in the nineteen-sixties. (Hank, the eldest, is the only survivor.) All in all, Hank Jones can be said to have had the most impressive second act in jazz history.

At Dizzy's, Jones and Lovano opened with "Lady Luck," written by Thad Jones and Frank Wess when they were members of Count Basie's band. Based on the harmonies of "Taking a Chance on Love," but with an initial melodic phrase that recalls "You Took Advantage of Me," the piece goes its own way, as did this performance, motored by Jones's plush stride and Lovano's fuzzy, Ben Webster-inspired timbre. Jones's casual authority has an effect not unlike Fred Astaire's dancing; he makes it look easy, not simple, and you want it to go on all night. Lovano is an ideal match for him. At fifty-four, he has synthesized the music of his generation in an almost Jonesian way, combining big-band apprenticeship with avant-garde curiosity. Since he and Jones began playing together, in 2003, they've made three CDs. The first two are quartet albums: "I'm All for You," in 2004, was widely acclaimed, but the follow-up, "Joyous Encounter," in 2005, demonstrates a deeper symbiosis; its version of "Autumn in New York" has the spacious commitment of a weathered classic.

With the new duet album, "Kids," the Jones-Lovano partnership ascends to a new level, and the record will surely make many of the year's best-of lists. Shorn of the rhythmic support of bass and percussion—Jones is, in effect, the rhythm section—the piano and tenor take on a conversational immediacy. In Thelonious Monk's "Four in One," the speed and precision of the playing all but meld piano and saxophone into a single instrument, recalling some of Monk's own collaborations. Other highlights include Lovano's portrait of Charlie Parker ("Charlie Chan," a pseudonym that Parker once used); Jones's harmonically challenging "Lullaby"; a wistful "Lazy Afternoon"; and a sensational reprise of Jones's solo-piano arrangement of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'." At Dizzy's, they also played Monk's "Monk's Mood": Lovano pulled away from the final chorus of his solo after an intense and convoluted flurry of eighth notes. Jones, with impeccable protocol, looked up before starting his own solo to make certain Lovano was done. Lovano nodded, and Jones's right hand instantly shot into an eloquent distillation of the chords, reshaping the melody. Lovano looked at him for a moment, and then admiringly shook his head. ♦

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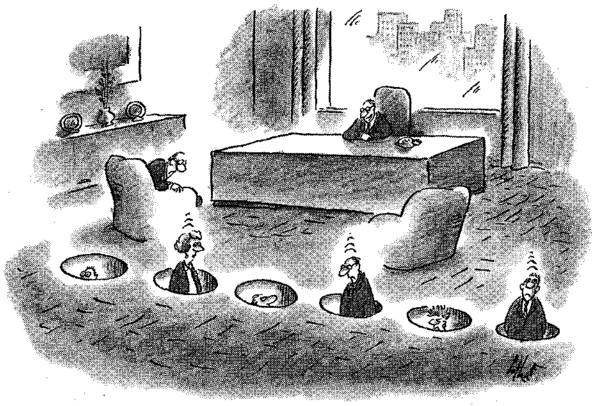
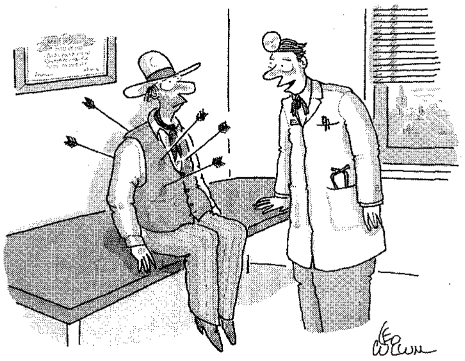
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Robert Mankoff, must be received by Sunday, June 3rd. Finalists in the May 21st contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the June 25th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Go fetch your mallet, Wilkins—we'll play doubles."
Joel Brouwer, Tuscaloosa, Ala.



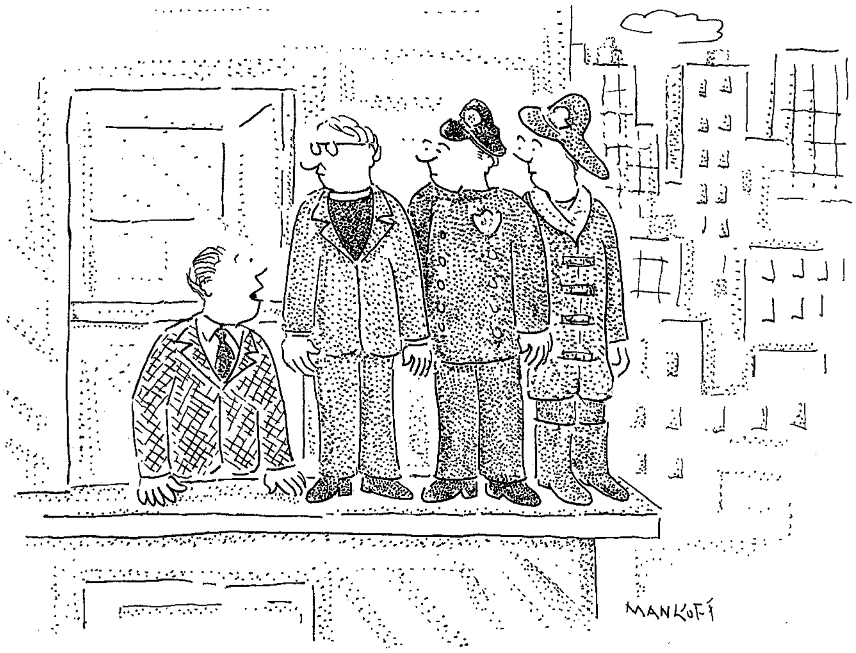
THE FINALISTS

"I'd like to get your arrow count down."
David Wilkner, Pawtucket, R.I.

"Have you tried sleeping on your side?"
Phyllis Mass, Philadelphia, Pa.

"On the plus side, it's a terrific example of Native American craftsmanship."
Norm Tabler, Indianapolis, Ind.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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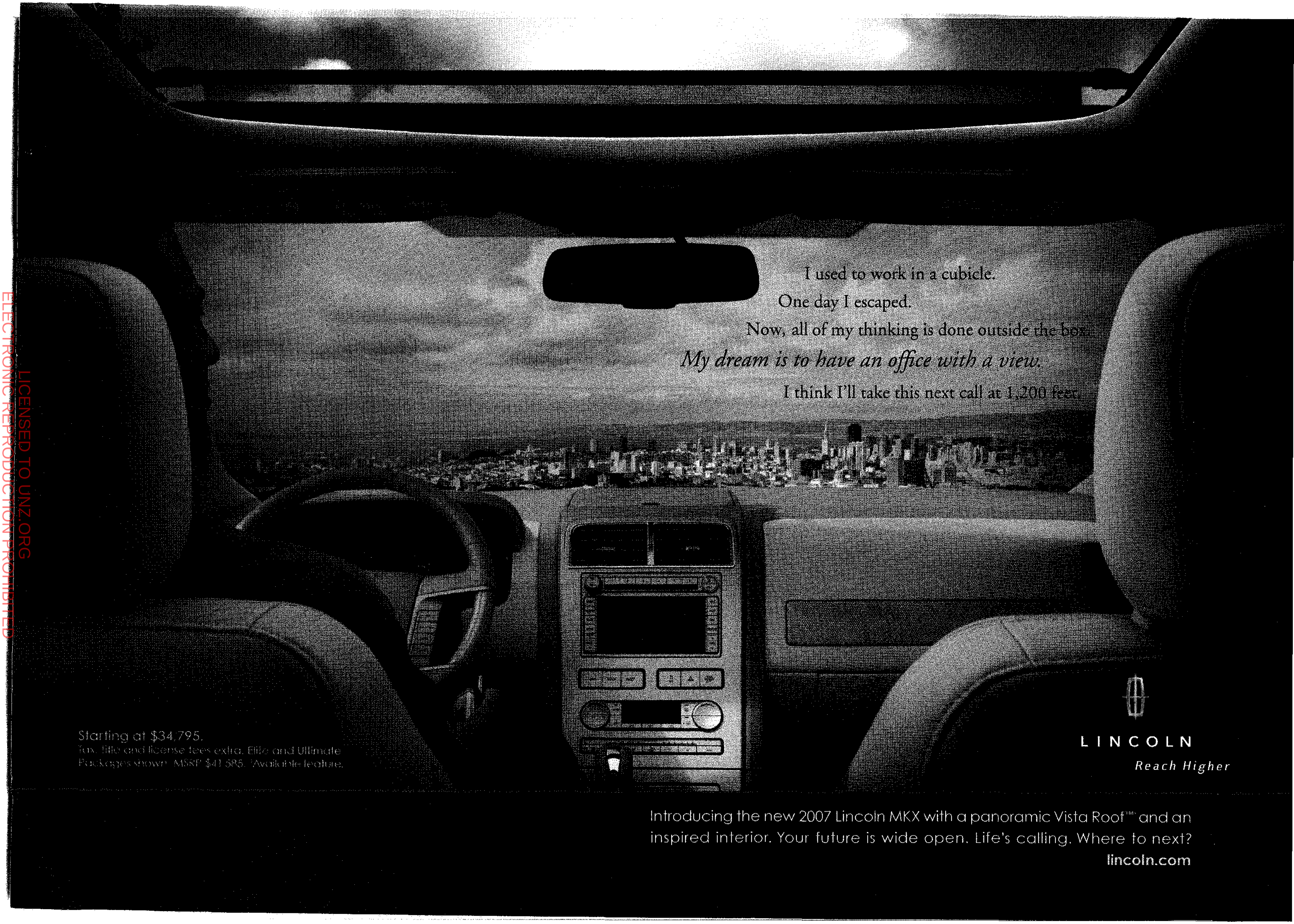

I used to work in a cubicle.
One day I escaped.
Now, all of my thinking is done outside the box.
My dream is to have an office with a view.
I think I'll take this next call at 1,200 feet.

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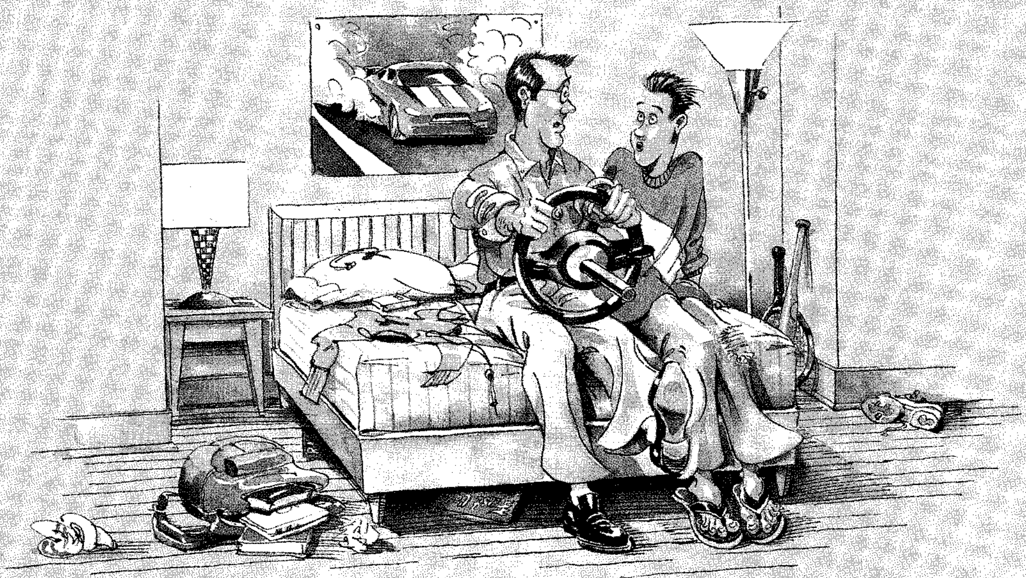
By 16, teens have had the *"Birds and Bees"* talk and the *"Say No to Drugs"* talk.

UNFORTUNATELY, NEARLY 6,000 TEENS DIE EACH YEAR BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T HAVE THE "DRIVING TALK."



CAN SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS A CONVERSATION STOP THE EPIDEMIC OF TEEN CAR CRASHES IN THIS COUNTRY?

Allstate thinks it can. We've identified some ways to help make teens safer behind the wheel.

1. Have the "Driving Talk." When parents and teens agree on driving restrictions and rules (such as never driving after midnight and having only one passenger), and the consequences of violating those rules, teens are less likely to take risks while driving. **Download a free Parent-Teen Driving Contract at Allstate.com/teen.**

2. Parents matter. Though you may think your teen isn't listening, 3 out of 4 teens say their parents would be the best influence in getting them to drive more safely. Lead by example. If you're a safe driver, your child is more likely to drive safely.

3. Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws work. GDL laws put limits on teen driving so kids can gain experience safely. Since North Carolina implemented one of the most comprehensive GDL laws in the country, it has seen a 25% decline in crashes involving 16-year-olds. **Find out what the GDL laws are in your state at Allstate.com/teen.** Help enforce them—and if they aren't strong enough, ask your legislator to strengthen them.

Teenagers are our future. Having one extra "talk" is a small price to pay to help them get there.

It's time to make the world a safer place to drive.
THAT'S ALLSTATE'S STAND

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